

Planning to Fail?: Leveraging the Olympic Bid

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Abstract

Purpose

In recent years, there has been a decline in the number of cities seeking to host the Olympic Games, with several cities withdrawing from the bid process following referenda. The debate around bidding has hinged on the costs and benefits of *hosting* events, with little consideration as to the benefits of a bid itself. This research identifies the ways in which Olympic bids can be leveraged for positive outcomes, regardless of the outcomes of the bid.

Design/methodology/approach

The research employs a content analysis, examining the 16 bid responses to the question in the IOC Candidate questionnaire: “What will be the benefits of bidding for the Olympic Games for your city/region, irrespective of the outcome of the bid?”.

Findings

This research found that bid cities do attempt to use the Olympic bid process as a leveraging resource, with four unique opportunities arising from this; national and city pride, Olympism, the formation of networks and global focus. These provide the opportunities for Olympic bid cities to achieve the following strategic objectives: nation and community building, sport participation, business opportunities, enhancing image and profile, and to push through infrastructural projects.

Originality/value

There has been little consideration as to the ways an Olympic bid can be used to leverage positive outcomes for a city or a nation, and therefore this research contributes to the literature on leveraging mega-events. The research also has practical value, in providing potential bidders with information regarding positive outcomes whether the bid is successful is not.

Introduction

The bidding process for sport mega-events is often surrounded by controversy, political machinations, promises of financial gain, and economic growth (MacAloon, 2016). The recent granting of host status to Russia (2018 FIFA World Cup), Qatar (2022 FIFA World Cup) and China (2022 Winter Olympics) has taken place against a backdrop of alleged corruption, back-handers, and brown bag payments (Blake and Calvert, 2015). There is increasing evidence that healthy competition to host the Olympics is coming to an end; the 2004 Olympic Games had 11 bidders, yet just Los Angeles and Paris were ultimately in contention for the 2024 and 2028 Games. The decline in bid cities has been exacerbated further with several democratic nations withdrawing recent bids after their citizens have failed to support the idea, contributing to the worldwide fall in the number of bidders (Grix *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been forced to set out an agenda for reform (Agenda 20-20) to avert a potential crisis in the longer-term (MacAloon, 2016).

Part of the IOC's addressing of these calls for reform is to compel bidders to consider legacies that can be gained purely from the bidding process. As part of the bidding process for a Games, each candidate city must complete a 'Candidature Questionnaire'. For the first time, the bidders for the 2016 Olympic Games were asked the following question, '*What will be the benefits of bidding for the Olympic Games for your city/region, irrespective of the outcome of the bid?*' (IOC, 2009, p.66). This question was also asked of each candidate city for the 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games, and the 2018 and 2022 Winter Games.

While there is a growing body of literature as to the types of legacies that nations seek by hosting mega-events, the ways in which a *bid* can be leveraged are under-researched. This paper, using content analysis, examines 16 responses from the candidate cities for the above mentioned five Olympic Games. The aim of this research is twofold: to contribute to under-researched area of the impact of bidding for Olympic Games, and in particular the strategies that can be employed to leverage

positive outcomes. This paper will combine the leveraging literature with the emergent research on bidding for mega-events.

Further, this research has practical implications. As the number of nations bidding for mega-events falls, it is clear that the current outcomes for bidding for an Olympic Games are not sufficiently rewarding to entice new bidders. This paper proposes that the bid process itself can be used to leverage positive outcomes, and thus these benefits should be considered when deciding whether to bid. The question regarding legacy of the bid is a comparatively recent addition to the Olympic questionnaire, and therefore bid cities may not be aware of the ways in which even an unsuccessful bid can be used for positive outcomes. This paper will build upon Chalip's model of a 'schematic representation of event leverage' (2004) to demonstrate the ways in which bids for mega-events can be leveraged to provide positive outcomes.

Literature Review

For several years, the rhetoric surrounding the hosting of mega-events has been that of legacy, a concept encouraged by the IOC, with the term being used 49 times in the Candidature Questionnaire for the 2024 Olympic Games. The most used definition of legacy is that of Preuss: "irrespective of the time of production and space, legacy is all planned and unplanned, positive and negative and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer than the event itself" (2007, p.211). However, the very fact that an outcome is mentioned in a candidate file indicates that it is planned, while a bidder is very unlikely to include negative outcomes in a document that is intended to be promotional. Consequently, the concept of leveraging is more appropriate for examining the legacy plans articulated within candidate files. Chalip defines leveraging as "those activities which need to be undertaken around the event itself... which seek to maximise the long-term benefit from events" (2004, p.228).

Whereas legacy may be unplanned, as per Preuss's definition, leveraging requires careful planning to ensure that the event provides positive benefits. Indeed, O'Brien (2006, p. 258) argues that the event

is purely the ‘seed capital’, with Smith noting that hosts use the event as a ‘hook’ from which to achieve positive outcomes (2014, p. 19).

Chalip proposes a ‘schematic representation of event leverage’ (2004), identifying four factors that are crucial. A *leverageable resource* should be identified initially, which provides *opportunities* for the host. These are the opportunities to achieve the *strategic objectives*, through adoption of the *means*, that is, the specific strategies and tactics that can be employed. Chalip first offers this model in regard to leveraging a portfolio of events (2004) with a focus on economic gains, with the model since being adapted to cover social event leverage (O'Brien and Chalip, 2008, p. 324).

Thus far, the literature has focused on the ways in which *hosting* an event can be used to leverage positive outcomes; there has been comparatively little attention paid to whether *bidding* can be leveraged. A bid can be leveraged to catalyse investment that may not have otherwise occurred. In these cases, a potential host can use the bid itself as a way of leveraging additional funding from levels of government who would otherwise be reluctant to offer financial assistance (Oliver, 2011). Indeed, this tactic has been recognised by Torres (2012), who argues that it is in the best interest of some cities to bid for Olympic Games, and not ultimately host. Instead, these cities, which Torres terms ‘utilitarian’ bidders, should use the bid as a tool to leverage economic and branding opportunities.

Using a bid to leverage positive outcomes will typically involve a bid city using the bid itself as a ‘hook’ to gain additional support from levels of government elsewhere in a country. For example, Oliver (2013) and Lauermann (2016) detail the ways in which government and political support can be leveraged during a bid phase for urban development. In the case of Toronto, the city used the bid to leverage additional funding from levels of government from which it would typically not receive support (Oliver, 2013). While Oliver (2013) and Lauermann (2016) do use the word leverage, neither truly uses the models or concepts initially put forward by Chalip; as such, it appears that there is yet to be an academic study identifying how leverage as a concept is used through the bid process.

This is not to say that leverage has no relevance to the bidding literature, which has focused on legacy. However, many of these legacies are clearly planned, and so can be viewed as the strategic objectives in Chalip's (2004) model. These are not dissimilar to leveraging plans discussed in the burgeoning literature on event hosting. This section will now continue to review the literature surrounding the leveraging of hosting events, while connecting it to the available literature surrounding bidding for events.

A key facet for leverage is the need for various stakeholders to work together to achieve the leveraged outcome. As Chalip and Leyns (2002) recognise, event organisers' priority is the managing of the event. Requiring organisers to also ensure that the event incurs positive benefits is at best a distraction. Second, often the event management team will be disbanded post-event, and thus is not in a position to ensure that the long-term benefits are achieved (Chalip, 2014). This is arguably more prevalent when considering leveraging bids, as a bid team is unlikely to stay together once a bid has been lost. Thus, Lauermann (2016) has called for nations that are planning to bid for multiple events to employ a specific organisation to ensure that leveraging plans can be achieved.

Much of the focus on event hosting has concentrated on the economic and social outcomes of the event, perhaps due to the emphasis on these by the host government (Smith, 2014). This is not dissimilar to the literature surrounding the bid, although much has focused on what should be termed legacy, rather than leverage. For example, Rose and Spiegel (2011) detail how an Olympic bid can act as a signal to induce international trade, and thus boost a nation's economy. However, this is seen as an unintended consequence of a bid, rather than a planned and deliberate strategy.

Chalip (2004) notes four ways in which an event can be leveraged to further economic benefits: 1) increase visitor spending, 2) prolong visits, 3) keep spending in the local economy, and 4) encourage business networking. The first three of these strategies are not relevant to an Olympic bid, which is unlikely to immediately generate tourist visitors. However, business networking, and collaboration between a wide range of public and private companies is a key component of an Olympic bid

(Andranovich, *et al.*, 2001). Before a bid is submitted, collaboration is needed between the National Olympic Committee (NOC) and the national government, with private companies often coming on board. Indeed, a number of bids have originated from private individuals, who are then required to collaborate with the NOC, the government, and other businesses who are involved as sponsors (Cook and Ward, 2011).

Yet, the networks formed as part of the bid are not leveraged. There is no reason why the ways in which hosting events have been used to leverage networking opportunities could not be transferred to bids; New Zealand implemented a government led networking scheme at the 2011 Rugby World Cup (Dickson, 2017). Similarly, the Business Club Australia, a networking initiative designed to encourage international trade was put to good use at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (O'Brien, 2006). While the business networks formed as part of a bid are unlikely to feature firms without an already existing domestic presence, these networks could be leveraged to bring together local firms to work with firms with a more pronounced national and international profile.

A further way to leverage an event for economic gains involves building a destination's brand (Chalip 2014). This has been seen with both developing and developed nations. South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup was seen as an opportunity to develop the image of the host, with the global attention on the country being seen as a leverageable resource (Knott, *et al.*, 2015). A key facet to South Africa's approach was that it did not just concentrate on those visitors to the event, but took advantage of the global media attention to change the image of the nation. The branding opportunities of hosting a World Cup were also capitalised on by Germany in 2006 (Grix, 2012), demonstrating that even well-known and developed nations can use an event to change image. Grix notes that Germany was seeking to increase its soft power, a policy also identified by Dickson in his study of the 2011 Rugby World Cup (Dickson, 2017).

The specific concept of leveraging an image change is not found within the bidding literature, yet this does not mean that bidders cannot leverage the global media attention that bidding for an Olympic

Games can bring. For example, Law (1994) and Tufts (2004) found that Manchester and Toronto were able to use the bid process to market themselves. Further, Manchester's Olympic bids were the foundation for its hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games, and its development as a sport city (Smith, 2005).

In addition to economic gains, it is possible to leverage social opportunities, in particular through the fostering of the liminality that occurs during the event (Chalip, 2006). Chalip specifically identifies five means through which social impacts can be leveraged; (1) encouragement of sociability at the event and away from it, (2) event-related social events, (3) the creation of informal social opportunities such as fan parks, (4) ancillary events such as arts festivals, and (5) theming (2006). O'Brien and Chalip take this further, proposing a model for social event leverage (2008). In this model, liminality is the resource which is to be leveraged, creating opportunities for social leverage. These opportunities are *communitas* and the global media attention, which then present two key objectives; to focus event stakeholders on social issues, and change the community agenda regarding society. Finally, the model identifies the specific strategies to be used to achieve the strategic objectives.

While liminality may not be created through a bid for an event, it is likely to create positive feelings for society. Griffiths (2000) and Law (1994) note how Cape Town and Manchester both received large amounts of public support as part of their Olympic bids. While it has not been discussed in the literature, these positive feelings created by the Olympic bid could be viewed as an opportunity that a city would not necessarily otherwise have access to. However, this support has a strong temporal aspect, and is likely to be confined to the duration of the bid itself; an unsuccessful bid is unlikely to continue to engender positive feelings once the bid process is over. A second caveat is that in recent years bidders have not received public support, with several cities withdrawing from the bid process following referenda (Streicher *et al.*, 2017).

A key social outcome that is often discussed pre-event is that of sport participation and health (Grix, *et al.*, 2017). However, research has shown that hosting of events has little impact upon participation

(Veal, *et al.*, 2012), and even events that have engaged in leveraging strategies to promote physical activity have been unsuccessful (Derom and VanWynsberghe, 2015). Taks, *et al.* (2013, p. 15) summarise the issues facing hosts and identify eight tactics that should be used; (a) the involvement of schools, (b) exhibition events for children, (c) meet and greet opportunities with athletes, (d) providing opportunities for local clubs to advertise, (e) taking advantage of the excitement of the moment, (f) using the media to promote opportunities and successes, (g) providing transportation, and (h) having a 'champion' within the community.

These eight tactics are not exclusive to hosting; there is little reason why they could not be used during the bid for an event. Vancouver's Legacies Now project utilised many of these tactics, gaining CA\$5 million from the Canadian government to improve levels of sport participation within British Columbia (Weiler and Mohan, 2009). While Vancouver's bid for the Winter Olympics was ultimately successful, Legacies Now was in place and had committed spending before the bid decision was made.

The use of events to leverage for social outcomes is possible, but has not been without criticism. Minnaert (2012) identifies that there are often social groups who are excluded from the social impacts, with Ziakas (2015) arguing that mega-events are not pareto-optimal; that is, in order to benefit one group of stakeholders, another group is made worse off. Even those events that have carefully planned leveraging strategies are likely to exclude some social groups. Despite the fact that the Commonwealth Games has specific parasport events, Misener *et al.* (2015) found that the 2014 Glasgow Games organisers did not sufficiently focus on this aspect of the Games.

A failure to provide social benefits is not the only criticism of the use of leverage. As already discussed, leverage requires different stakeholders to work together. This is likely to be problematic, especially if it requires businesses who normally compete with each other to interact and share information (Chalip, 2014). While this is a specific issue, Smith (2014) offers a more theoretical problem; leverage is principally a narrative to support the political motivations behind the hosting of an event. Smith goes further, tentatively putting forth the question that if mega-events may be hosted purely as a

means through which to leverage social or economic outcomes, then does this suggest that mega-events themselves are in fact expensive distractions from the ultimate social or economic objectives?

As this review of the literature has demonstrated, while it is clear that the bid process can be leveraged, there has thus far been little research into this. Thus, this research seeks to investigate the ways in which Olympic bids be leveraged for positive outcomes.

Method

This paper utilises a content analysis of the 16 bid documents submitted by 16 candidate cities for the 2016, 2020 and 2024 Summer Olympic Games, and the 2018 and 2022 Winter Olympic Games. The question ‘what will be the benefits of bidding for the Olympic Games for your city/region, irrespective of the outcome of the bid?’ (IOC, 2009, p.66) was introduced for the bidders for the 2016 Summer Games, with each bid city since answering this question. Bidding for the Olympic Games is a two step process; bid cities submit an ‘Applicant File’ to the IOC (Febowitz, 2012; IOC, 2015a). These applicant files are evaluated, and preferred cities are put forward to the Candidate City stage. It is here that bidders are required to complete a Candidature Questionnaire, answering the stated question. Thus, any city that bid for these Olympic Games, but did not reach the Candidate City stage, did not answer this question and so are not included in this research.

Table 1 provides a summary of the bids.

Table 1: Summary of the Bids

City	Event Year	Olympic Type	Section Heading	Answer Word Count	Reference
Chicago	2016	Summer	Benefits Of The Bid	177	Chicago 2016 (2009, p. 21)
Madrid	2016	Summer	Benefits of Bidding	455	Madrid 2016 (2009, p. 19)
Rio	2016	Summer	Benefits of Bidding	216	Rio 2016 (2009, p. 23)
Tokyo	2016	Summer	Welcome benefits from Tokyo's bid	388	Tokyo 2016 (2009, p. 28)
Annecy	2018	Winter	The Benefits of the Bid for the City and Territory	405	Annecy 2018 (2011, p. 19)
Munich	2018	Winter	Munich Is Delivering Tremendous Benefits From The Bid Regardless Of The Outcome	293	Munich 2018 (2011, p. 23)
Pyeong-Chang	2018	Winter	Benefits of PyeongChang's Bids	384	PyeongChang 2018 (2011, p.21)
Istanbul	2020	Summer	Benefits of bidding	175	Istanbul 2020 (2013, p. 21)
Madrid	2020	Summer	Benefits of the Bid	316	Madrid 2020 (2013, p. 17)
Tokyo	2020	Summer	Benefits of bidding	193	Tokyo 2020 (2013, p. 6)
Almaty	2022	Winter	Legacy of bidding for the Games	125	Almaty 2022 (2015, p. 13)
Beijing	2022	Winter	Legacy of the Bid	155	Beijing 2022 (2015, p. 19)
Budapest	2024	Summer	Bidding and hosting benefits	307	Budapest 2024 (2017, p. 24)
LA	2024	Summer	Benefits beyond the Games	640	LA 2024 (2017, p. 20)
Paris	2024	Summer	Outstanding economic, social, environmental and sport benefits	211	Paris 2024 (2017, p. 39)
Rome	2024	Summer	Long term benefits for city/region/country	302	Rome 2024 (2017, p. 21)

The 16 answers were isolated from the Candidate Files (question 1.4 for bidders for the 2016 and 2022 Games, question 1.3 for bidders for the 2018 and 2020 Games, and question 2.4 for bidders for 2024) and uploaded into NVivo, a specialist qualitative data analysis software. For the bidders for the 2024 Olympic Games, the question was worded differently, instead asking for ‘Bidding and hosting benefits?’. Therefore, the leveraging opportunities identified by the bidders from the bid alone were manually separated from those identified from hosting the event.

The answers provided by each candidate city were examined to identify any purposeful and planned leveraging of the bid, in accordance to Chalip’s definition that leverage is “those activities which need to be undertaken around the event itself... which seek to maximise the long-term benefit from events” (2004, p.228). For example, PyeongChang’s recognition that the bid is being used to attract national government investment that will be used to invest in transport infrastructure (PyeongChang 2018, 2011, p. 21) is considered to be leveraging, whereas Madrid 2020’s assertion that the bid will

lead to “improvements to the public transport network” (Madrid 2020, 2013, p.17) is not, as there is no information provided as to how this will be achieved. While many *legacies* are offered within the candidate files, there are comparatively few examples that can be considered leveraging.

Once the leveraging opportunities were identified, they were coded twice. The first set of coding identified four different areas in which leveraging opportunities can be found. These areas are seen in Table 2, together with illustrative examples.

Table 2: Illustrative examples of coding

Area for Leverage	Illustrative Example	Reference
Sport Participation	<i>The Chicago 2016 candidature has inspired the creation of World Sport Chicago. This organization establishes programs to increase youth participation in sport, promote Olympic values and education and elevate the profile of Olympic and Paralympic sport in Chicago by bringing international competition to the city. World Sport Chicago is financed and will continue to manage sport-related legacy projects well beyond 2009.</i>	Chicago 2016 (2009, p. 21)
Nation and Community Building	<i>The increases in sport participation and youth engagement, both for grassroots and elite athletes, will deliver health, social cohesion, community goodwill and national pride outcomes for the nation for generations.</i>	Istanbul 2020 (2013, p. 21)
Urban Development	<i>The bid efforts have been the driving force behind attracting governmental investment to the region for the development of PyeongChang as the premiere winter sports hub of Asia. This investment has allowed for expanded and improved winter sports facilities, such as venues for cross-country skiing, biathlon and ski jumping (newly built)</i>	PyeongChang 2018 (2011, p.21)
Global Profile	<i>The bidding process provides excellent opportunities for us to promote Madrid on the world stage, increasing global awareness of our city, our business and tourism offers.</i>	Madrid 2016 (2009, p. 19)

Once this had been completed, the answers were coded a second time, to identify the four components of Chalip’s model; the leverageable resource, opportunities, strategic objectives, or means by which they may be achieved. These typically corresponded to the areas for leverage seen in Table 2, with only the opportunity for business networking not being complementary to any identified strategic objectives.

Results

This research has identified a key leverageable resource; the bid process itself. An Olympic bid is a unique opportunity for a city; since the very first Olympic Games in 1896, just 115 cities from 45 nations have bid for the Summer or Winter Olympic Games. Of these, 55 cities have bid just once. Of the 16 bidders in the sample, four specifically note that the bid process would be the catalyst through which to achieve their planned outcomes. For example, Rome 2024 noted that “the Rome 2024 bid is already serving as a catalyst for change” (Rome 2024, p.21). The bid does not necessarily need to inspire new projects; eight bidders noted that the bid process would ‘accelerate’ plans, indicating that the bidders already had these plans in place, with the bid being leveraged to ensure that these occur.

The coding of the data has revealed that legacy is still very much at the forefront of the bidders’ minds, with a prominent focus on the *strategic objectives* within Chalip’s (2004) model. As will be seen, opportunities were discussed, but appear to be thought of as end goals in their own rights. For example, several bidders mentioned the positive feelings that a bid can engender for the community, viewing this as a strategic objective, rather an opportunity. Similarly, increases in government funding and community engagement were viewed as outcomes in their own rights, rather than *means* by which further strategic outcomes can be realised.

Thus, this results section is structured by the four areas of outcomes that were most prominently recognised within the candidate files; sport participation, nation and community building, enhanced image, and urban development.

Sport Participation

One of the key ways in which cities seek to benefit from an Olympic bid is through an increase in sport participation within the city, and in particular encouraging children to participate in sport. While a number of bidders viewed this as a natural legacy of an Olympic bid, Chicago 2016, Tokyo 2016 and Istanbul 2020 all created bodies responsible for delivering this strategic objective. Tokyo 2016

specified that the Fund for Promotion and Exchange in Sports and Culture had a budget of \$200 million in order to promote sport within the city of Tokyo (Tokyo 2016, 2009, p. 28).

A second key facet of encouraging youth sport participation is through embracing the Olympic values and Olympism generated from being a Candidate city. For example, Madrid 2016 developed the 'Generation 16 initiative', which sought to promote Olympic values and playing of sport throughout all levels of education, from schools to universities (Madrid 2016, 2009, p.19).

Therefore, in accordance with Chalip's (2004) model, the unique opportunity that is provided to cities is Olympism, an opportunity that would not be available to cities were they not bidding. The means by which cities can take advantage of this is through exposing school children and youths to Olympism by introducing it through education systems. This can then assist the strategic objective of enhancing sport participation through the bid.

Nation and Community Building

The second outcome sought by bidders is that of using the bid to unite its citizens together, whether on a national scale, or within local communities. Istanbul 2020 noted that the National Sports Plan, designed to encourage sport participation, also delivers "health, social cohesion, community goodwill and national pride outcomes for the nation for generations" (2013, p. 21). Tokyo 2020 similarly sought to unite sport and community outcomes, by athletes from Tokyo visiting local communities within the city through the newly formed 'Tokyo Athletes Circle' (Tokyo 2020, 2013).

The candidate files are clear regarding both the opportunity (national and city pride), and the strategic objective (nation and community building), yet they do not discuss the means by which this would be achieved. There is little information provided regarding the mechanics of how bidders can use the national and city pride that is generated from an Olympic bid to build a community.

Urban Development

The bid can also be used as a catalyst for urban development. 13 of the bidders detailed the urban development that would be achieved through the bid, although many of the bidders discussed urban development as a legacy, rather than a leveraging opportunity. However, PyeongChang 2018 (2011) and Beijing 2022 (2015) both detailed the building of new winter sport facilities as part of the bid. Similarly, Istanbul 2020 noted the building of “415 new community sports facilities and 24 stadia, of which 215 projects are already in progress” (2013, p. 21). These three examples are key, as each recognised that the funding for these developments came from additional government investment that is unlikely to have been otherwise available.

The majority of bidders identified urban development and the building of new facilities as strategic objectives. The means by which this objective was achieved was through the increased investment from national governments, which cities would be unlikely to receive should they not be involved in the bid process. However, there is little information regarding the opportunity that makes this possible.

Global profile

The final way in which bid cities sought to leverage an Olympic bid is through the raising of its global profile. While the IOC has strict regulations as to the ways in which a bid city can market itself internationally (IOC 2015b), bidders still viewed the process of an Olympic bid as a way for a city to be globally marketed. For example, Madrid 2016 noted that the “bidding process provides excellent opportunities for us to promote Madrid on the world stage, increasing global awareness of our city, our business and tourism offers” (2009, p.19). Indeed, six of the bid cities believed that the bid itself would contribute to increasing the profile of either the city or the nation on the world stage.

It is clear that the enhanced attention and focus on the bidder is the opportunity, and that an enhanced global image and profile is the strategic objective. However, as with urban development, there is little information provided regarding the means by which achieving this strategic objective

can be achieved. Indeed, Rome 2024 provided the most detail on this, noting that this objective can be focused on “after February 2017, when information on Rome’s candidature can be communicated internationally” (2017, p. 21).

Networking

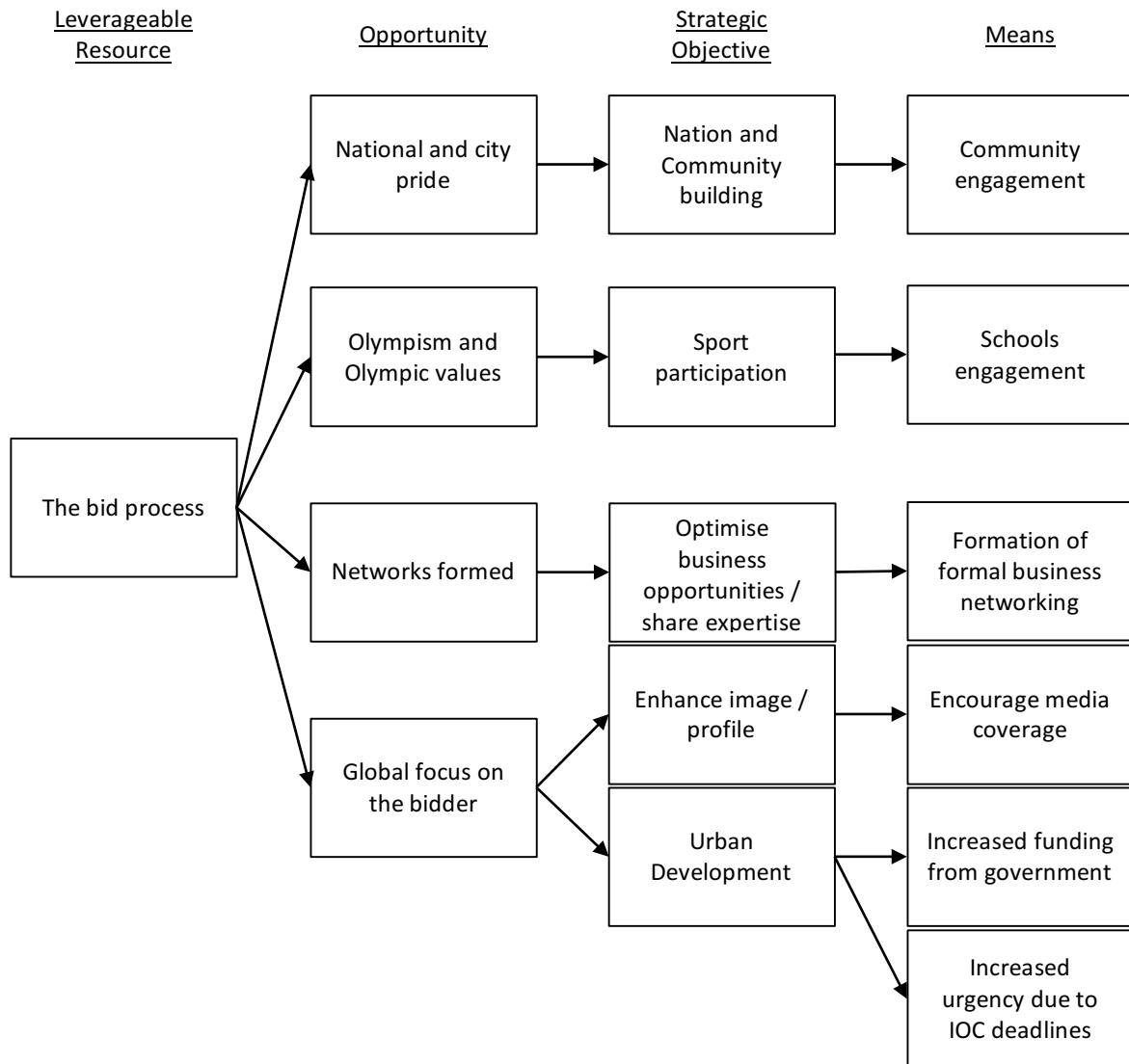
The final result that is provided within the candidate files is not a strategic objective. Rather, several bidders noted the networking opportunities that a bid provides. These evolve as part of an Olympic bid; Munich 2018 recognised that the bid process has “drawn together a network of experts from city, state and federal government, from sport, business, education, technology, culture and the environmental community to envision a new future for Munich and Bavaria through the Games” (Munich 2018, 2011, p. 23). Similarly, Almaty 2022 recognised that the “shared dream of hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games has created new networks and forms of collaboration” (Almaty 2022, 2015, p.13).

While the opportunity to form collaborative networks is noted by bidders, it is viewed as an outcome in its own right, with little discussion as to how this opportunity can be leveraged to gain a positive outcome.

Discussion

This paper has thus far sought to discuss the leveraging opportunities available to cities bidding for the Olympic Games, and adapts Chalip’s (2004) event leverage model to these results to produce a model for bid leverage (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A model of Olympic bid leverage



As discussed in the results section, the leverageable resource can be viewed as the bid process itself. This leverageable resource creates several opportunities, the first of which is the pride that is generated within a city and a nation that bids for an Olympic Games. City and national pride is recognised by Paris 2024 (2017), and has been considered in the literature (Griffiths, 2000; Law, 1994). Pride is particularly evident at the time of the bid decision, as citizens congregate to watch the bid decision; for example, supporters of London’s bid for the 2012 Games gathered in Trafalgar Square to view the bid decision (BBC Sport, 2005).

The pride generated within a city or nation is an opportunity for nation and community building. However, such community building is not guaranteed and is an opportunity that needs to be treated with care. Recent years have seen a rise in protests against bids, leading to several cities withdrawing from the bid process. Indeed, Budapest and Rome both ultimately withdrew their bid before the final decision was made, in the face of public opposition (Grix *et al.*, 2017). Thus it is clear that the opportunity for nation and community building is not one that is guaranteed to occur for bid cities, and as such bid teams and democratic governments need to ensure that support is cultivated, and opposition to the bid is considered and managed. A way in which this can be achieved is through ensuring that community engagement occurs throughout the bid (Oliver, 2011). While this is not expressly discussed within the bid documents, the need for consultation within the local communities has been highlighted within the literature and is considered to be a key contributor to bringing together communities (*ibid*). A second opportunity generated by the bid process is that of Olympism, and in particular within the school system. The idea of Olympism, and Olympic values are prominent within the candidate files and often are linked to encouraging youth sport participation. Bidders are seeking to foster the Olympic spirit, and national or city pride as detailed earlier, to encourage youth sport participation. Indeed, all discussion of Olympism within the candidate files includes the involvement of the school and education systems. Using of Olympism to encourage school children to partake in sport corresponds with the eight opportunities for encouraging sport participation through hosting put forward by Taks *et al.* (2013, p. 16), which include “involving schools, before, during and after the event”, and “building up momentum, and grasping the excitement of the moment”, highlighting the use of Olympism in encouraging sport participation.

A third opportunity provided by the bid process is the bringing together of a large number of different stakeholders. In order to bid, the National Olympic Committee and government need to work together, while private investment will often be sought to help fund the bid (Andranovich, *et al.*, 2001). This collaboration is detailed by Munich 2018, Almaty 2022, and Rome 2024 but all view the networks formed as the final outcome, rather than as an opportunity for future development.

However, drawing on the literature, it can be seen that a bid is an opportunity for a city to bring together these different organisations to network and work together. The networking opportunities are clear; each candidate file notes that it will work closely with the IOC, TOP sponsors, and local partners, with the Chicago 2016 candidate file listing three pages of donors, which range from individuals to multinational organisations such as Goldman Sachs (Chicago 2016, 2009b, pp. 163-165), with several local businesses included. An Olympic bid appears to be an ideal opportunity for a bid team to form business networks, allowing local businesses to interact with larger, international organisations.

It should be recognised that firms involved in a bid are likely to already have an interest in the city, whereas the networking event detailed by O'Brien (2006) was designed to encourage non-domestic firms to network with domestic firms, and thus encourage trade. If a bid city provides networking opportunities for domestic firms, then this is unlikely to increase national trade, and will not boost the economy in the same way. However, plans that allow domestic businesses to network with international organisations still allow the opportunity for knowledge sharing and to provide business development opportunities (Mitchell, Schlegelmilch and Mone, 2016).

The final opportunity that is provided is the global focus and attention that bid cities and nations receive. This opportunity can enable bid cities to achieve their strategic objective of enhancing their image and profile. This strategic outcome is identified by six of the 16 bidders, thus highlighting its importance. While there is a lack of information in the candidate files regarding the means by which this objective may be achieved, the mere act of submitting a bid will see the city being discussed in the media (Andranovich, *et al.*, 2001). The candidate files themselves can be viewed as a vehicle for promotional material, with both Paris and LA 2024 having their Candidate Files available for download from their websites which carry further promotional material (Silva dos Santos and Alves Medeiros, 2015). Due to IOC restrictions upon international promotion during the bid (IOC, 2015b), this is one of the few ways in which a city can promote itself during the bid phase. Further, international media

companies carry the discourse and narrative surrounding the bids, further intensifying the global coverage.

Bid cities can also secure a second strategic objective from the opportunities arising from the global focus on bidders; the opportunity to catalyse city projects that are already being planned. This is of particular use for those utilitarian bidders who are using the bid purely as a way to leverage positive outcomes (Torres, 2012). There are two clear ways in which bidders can utilise this opportunity as a catalyst. One way is that a bidder may secure additional funding from governmental departments that they would not otherwise have access to. PyeongChang 2018 (2011, p. 21), Istanbul 2020 (2013, p. 21) and Beijing 2022 (2015, p. 19) all note that the bid has led to increased government investment within their respective regions. Similarly, New York used the strict deadlines enforced by the IOC to push through the necessary legal and technical reviews needed to gain approval for nine regeneration projects within the city (Moss, 2011). These projects were all part of the initial bid, and were planned to take place should New York have been successful, but the city successfully used the bid to gain approval for the projects to be pushed forward regardless of whether the bid was successful.

Conclusions

This study has extended the leveraging literature to encompass an area that has thus far been neglected; the ways in which an Olympic bid itself can be leveraged. This research has studied the recent candidate files, and in particular the answer to issue of the “What will be the benefits of bidding for the Olympic Games for your city/region, irrespective of the outcome of the bid?” (IOC, 2009, p. 66). The information from the candidate files has been taken and combined with the existing literature to provide a proposed model for bid leveraging.

This research has two notable implications. First, there is a contribution to the burgeoning literature of both the impact of Olympic bids, and of leveraging mega-events. Leverage has thus far been considered separately to bidding, and therefore this research contributes to expanding the mega-event literature. However, as this study uses just secondary data, it does not offer a comprehensive

review of the leveraging opportunities available to Olympic bidders; it is restricted purely to consider those detailed in the candidate files and the existing literature. Given the lack of literature available when considering Olympic bids, and in particular the ways in which these bids can be leveraged, a suggested future direction for research is the intended outcomes of Olympic bids, and more specifically, the tactics and strategies used by bid cities to achieve them.

Second, this paper also provides practical contributions. Prior to 2009, no bid team had been asked to consider the legacies of a bid, and so it is only in recent years that this has truly been part of the bid process. Thus, this research provides bid teams with potential objectives for bids, together with information as to how the bid process can be exploited to gain opportunities. The positive impact that a bid can have should be taken into account when a city is considering whether to bid or not; if they are aware of the positive outcomes from the bid process alone, this may encourage more cities to enter the bid process.

Finally, as has been shown, the answers provided in the candidate files are discrete, with each legacy of the bid viewed separately. This research has demonstrated how these different legacies which bidders are already working towards can be used collectively to leverage further positive outcomes.

Limitations

This paper has an obvious limitation, which needs to be recognised and addressed. As already mentioned, this is purely a content analysis, and it is not within the scope of this paper to triangulate results through verifying bidders' claims. This limitation also raises questions for the IOC, as to the extent to which bidding nations are held to their promises. It is likely that once the bidder has left the bidding process, or indeed following the hosting of a Games, the IOC will no longer hold any influence over the city. This reinforces the already mentioned suggestions for future research; to investigate the extent to which bid cities follow through with the plans stated during the bid process

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