

'Ice Cream Economy' and Mega-Events Legacy, Perspectives for Urban Tourism Management

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Abstract

Mega-events play an accelerating role in the transformation of host cities with renewed image, pride, and the construction of infrastructure to sustain economic development. Given the high investment costs and risks associated with mega-events for the host city, local authorities try to catalyze their efforts for improved infrastructure and durable legacies. Contrary to the assumption, tourism doesn't necessarily grow during the event and even shows disappointing results in the post-event years. Evaluating the tangible and intangible benefits of mega-events in the long run remains a challenge for a destination. Events are considered to have a short lifecycle and melt like ice cream, hence the term "ice cream economy". The purpose of this conceptual paper is to analyze the relationship between host city planning, mega-events and tourism sustainability. It discusses internal and external changes that affect host destinations and how tourism makes use of the legacies of mega-events. The paper reviews the current literature and then takes a case study approach to compare mega-events and their impacts in selected cities with significant tourism planning outcomes. Findings show that mega-events bring specific magnifying elements to urban economies. Cities that have allowed tourism strategies and policies a more central role in the mega-event planning have shown more successful results over time. They have connected the strong infrastructure development of mega-events with enhanced tourism products and uses. This paper concludes with recommendations for tourism management and ice cream economy, integration in planning by destinations that host mega-events. This includes strategies to integrate these innovative tourism policies to city management.

Keywords: Mega-events; Tourism planning; Destination planning; Urban tourism; Ice cream economy

Introduction

Mega-events are portrayed as potential catalysts for accelerating economic transformation of the host into a "world class" destination. The "world-class" facilities and "global image" are assumed as an enduring legacy of hosting mega-events [1,2]. Mega-events are defined as: "limited to a few such as Olympic Games and the FIFA world cup (...) and due to the resources, magnitude and commitment required, they can be hosted only a limited number of destinations" [3]. Mega-events are assumed to create large and lasting benefits, such as attracting funds from non-domestic sources, creation of more jobs, and an increase of tourism incomes for the host cities, justifying heavy investments in sports venues, transportation and related infrastructure [4,5]. Several issues affect host destinations and how the event legacy is used [6]. Many studies have looked at the economic impacts of mega-events on the destination, and tried to assess the return on investment and economic sustainability in the light of huge financial risks taken [2,7-10]. Some studies show how the interests of the Mega-Event Organizers (MEO) might differ from those of the host city while others have looked at the globalized media coverage and the benefits for destinations to narrate uniqueness of the place or branding [11-13]. The perspective of urban renewal allowed through mega-events was also analyzed in many studies. Shanghai, Barcelona, Beijing, Athens are the most cited examples of cities that have undergone massive urban transformation through mega-events, although the sustainability of some of the built legacy has been challenged [2,5,11,13-15]. Tourism is invoked by most bidding cities as an obvious legacy from mega-events, although its growth hasn't been automatic after the event is over. Three keys aspects are discussed: mega-events, the host city and tourism, and the dimension of time with the legacies and subsequent post-events tourism. The question of the socio-economic changes pushing for mega-events, long term planning, the development of tourism and the underlying vision of the host destination are seldom

combined in a single angle. A major contradiction comes between the goals of long-term impacts and sustainability on destination and the rather short lifespan of events whose legacy melt like ice cream. Some destinations have turned mega-events and tourism to their advantage while others struggle with the "ice cream economy" of event legacies. How to reconcile the paradox of Ice-cream Economy realities with the long-term sustainability of the destination in planning? This paper is a reflection on mega-events with regards to the long term competitiveness and sustainability project of a destination. It argues that touristification transforms cities and requires adapted planning and that mega-events magnify this evolution. The paper first reviews the current literature on tourism paradigm shifts in urban economies and mega-events impacts. It then assesses several cities that hosted mega-events and the place currently given to the ice-cream economy. Finally, it discusses the legacies formed by mega-events and how they challenge the destinations' planning, governance and place given to tourism.

Ice Cream Economy and Urban Tourism

Tourism has become instrumental in cities aiming for global status. Pradel and Simon [16] underline how central is the: "role of tourism as a referential in socio-spatial urban organisation strategies." This

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understanding follows changing paradigm in the economy of cities, with a process transforming them into leisure playgrounds. The process of rejuvenation of urban industrial, manufacturing and port areas (Sea fronts, banks of rivers) has transformed cities into tertiary and service-based economies. The construction of easily connected (close to stations, subway access and with airport links) scenic spaces including cultural, commercial, leisure and tourism dimensions has turned cities into leisure spaces. Large scale hotel clusters, use of MICE and festivals, development of integrated resorts, heritage and cosmopolitanism are known as touristification. Cities like Bilbao, Barcelona, Singapore have become the epitome of urban shift towards tourism and leisure combining urbanism, tourism and new economy to assert the “creative economy” [14,17]. Pilette and Kadri [18] have used the term “ice cream economy” to express the development of events and limited-duration tourism products that drive the urban tourism.

Understanding the “Ice Cream Economy” and the Leisure-based City

“The contemporary city has become the playground of the tourism and leisure while tourism has become a key element of the urbanization with: job creation, commodification urban, peri-urban tourist centers, urban residential tourism” [19]. Kadri and Pilette [18] call “Ice Cream Economy” the constant need for new products and events offer renewal in order to maintain a destination’s attractiveness. This reflects Hannigan [20] arguments on the Fantasy City, in which tourism and leisure play a growing role in cities economy. For him this is a process radically changing cities and that include aggressive urban marketing and branding; targeted strategies; 24/7 activities; a diversified range of experiences and products that are constantly renewed, as in the “ice-cream economy” (Table 1). Cultural and media products support the branding effort of the destination, and mega-events are able to be a catalyst of the transformation.

Furthermore tourism and quality of life seem to be criteria to give legitimacy to a global city, and its world-class’ attributes and the use of rankings going from quality of life to economic and cultural power [21,22]. The expansion of city marketing techniques has led to the progressive evolution into destination branding strategies [13]. Cities even with little heritage have the potential to become attractive destinations by their way of life and their connection to the global world, to the advantage of mega-events destinations. That creates favorable conditions for destinations, relying on the fleeting ice cream economy. These changes in the city also impacts residents as consumers and users of the new urban and leisure offer [23]. However the event euphoria is at risk of being followed by a post-event inertia due to financial constraints, tourism oversupply and degraded image. They provide infrastructure, human capacity building, bring value. Cohen and Cohen [24] observe that the growth of a demand for experience replaces the traditional need for authenticity.

These changes strongly underline the need to integrate tourism to transport and urban planning as a core element, mostly overlapping residents’ needs, rather than duplicating a separate infrastructure

for tourism. Currently mega-events are promoted as an agent of growth of the IOC rather than the cities’ through tourism and leisure activities. Rio 2016’s mission is “To deliver excellent Games (...) underpinned by social and urban sustainable transformation through sport, contributing to the growth of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements”. Tourism is still very much perceived as a “side activity” by many destinations rather than a central sector of the local economy. The tourism administration reflects this, often sharing ministerial portfolios with “culture’ or ‘youth and sports’. The same applies at regional levels, where tourism governance remains traditional and unprepared to handle mega-events resulting in missed opportunities.

It is argued that societal and economic changes are important factors to consider. Mega-events need long term tourism development strategy for destination success during and after the event. The host destination develops and transforms its infrastructure, not only to handle the massive influx of visitors, media coverage and investment, but to the benefits of the city with innovation in tourism planning, policy and governance. The analysis of mega-events host cities’ cases focuses on the successes and innovation in integrating the paradox of events ‘ice cream’ economy and long term tourism planning in the city, before, during and after the event.

Mega-Events and Tourism Issues

Mega-events are considered to play an accelerating role in the transformation of host cities. Each city includes tourism as a potential outcome from the mega-event. It also expects to become a destination despite conflicting interests and expectations from the mega-events. Host destinations face the complexity and scale of organization, the layers of internal and external stakeholders, financial, socio-economic and political considerations, explain that the focus might be strongly inclined towards the interests of the event organizer, who brings expertise in mega-event management rather than towards the interests of the destination.

Motives: interest of the city or the event, which comes first?

Since the 1970’s Mega-events have dramatically changed. Roche, emphasizes how globalisation “exacerbated tension on global mega-event organization and increased attention and expectation on the community” (Roche, 2006). Mega-events provide global media opportunities and challenges to both the event organization and the hosting destination. Mega events are perceived to be “more often in the interests of global flows of finance, technology and imagery, rather than local communities” [25]. Chen and Spaans [26] argue that local elites, government officials and private sector interests groups might use the “institutional apparatus to pursue material goals” in pushing for mega-events. For instance the economic benefits brought by the Olympics have been argued as more potential and forecasted than realized and statistically traceable ones [7,8,27]. The absence of relevant accounting standards makes it difficult to assess the real cost [8]. “Measuring the net impact of mega-events on host economies is fraught with complication, and there is a temptation for countries bidding to hold mega-events to overstate the expected benefits. (...) The arguments

Characteristics	Attributes
Standardized global attributes	Hotels, F&B, global clusters of leisure, recreation, heritage, lifestyle, shopping- Access and transport system, public spaces
Open 24/7	Development of themed supply. Impression of constant offer
Aggressively marketed	Use of global media for destination branding. Use of digital media, involvement of user-created contents
Branding strategies	Planning of long term branding, tourism and leisure based economy. Diversified and wide range of experiences
Constantly renewed products	Short Life cycle for products and destination. Strategies of renewal in overall planning (ice cream economy)

Table 1: Touristified city and ice cream economy (adapted from Hannigan, 1998).

for holding mega-events on economic grounds alone remain inconclusive". Despite official legacy management in place mistakes are repeated and escalating budgets are becoming the norm. Increased taxes, cost overruns, local disruptions and «white elephant» buildings are concerns for destinations [10]. TMEO's expertise and body-of-knowledge in mega-events impose organizational requirements upon the host city that not necessarily coincide with the city's long term interests [1]. The lack of sustainability of mega-events are scare offs to potential and actual host cities. The increased financial risks and social costs related to hosting mega-events seem to outweigh the economic benefits. This questions the future of mega-events by cities [28]. In the case of Winter Olympics, only 51% of residents in Annecy and 60% in Munich supported the 2018 games bid [29]. 32% of Annecy residents opposed the games, since the financing would had been mostly local with minimal funding from the central government. For the 2022 candidacy, high costs and political opposition deterred several cities to bid, and two candidate cities withdrew and two others could still drop out.

Intangible and tangible legacies: Branding, white elephants and tourism

Cities are motivated to bid for mega-events since they stimulate economic growth, social benefits, tourism, infrastructure improvements and national pride and prestige [30]. Olympics attract between 3,000 (winter/youth) to 10,000 athletes (summer) and more than 4 billion people would watch the opening ceremony. Tourism is often viewed as one of the benefits from organizing mega-events, and a potential for long-term return on investment. Destinations "unsatisfied with their role merely as cultural celebrations or athletic endeavours, cities are using sport events strategically to achieve urban regeneration" [31]. By hosting a mega event, local authorities are able to promote and regenerate infrastructure of the destination due to the vast investment which is made available [32]. The intangible benefits of mega-events are destination image makeovers that improve self-esteem, and international recognition [3,12,33,34]. Hosting a mega-event is a rite of passage for destinations in need of a powerful symbolic recognition of their socio-economic accomplishments as in the case of Spain [11], Seoul in 1988, and China in 2010 (Beijing and Shanghai). Impacts on national pride and collective memory are perceived as profound while the socio-economic benefits and infrastructure improvements were more part of a period of growth in which the mega-event was simply a catalyst for targeted growth [5]. Mega-event branding efforts might also be perceived as not representing a city, its identity, its people and its soul. It can be a fabricated image serving the interests of a particular group, whether corporate, as in Atlanta over commercial Olympics, or government quest for international recognition like in Sochi in 2014. Critics of the current imbalance between tangible and intangible benefits are mostly concerned with the destination's general interest and a durable socio-economic health.

Legacy management helps to redefine the meaning of mega-event success introducing a longer term of expectations, which is in line with any master plan. Since 2005 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) requires bidding cities to describe sports and non-sports legacies as criteria of selection [35,36]. In this aspect, it appears that legacy management is mostly concerned with the future of the sporting venue, nominally the two "white elephants": the main stadium and the athletes' village. The Bird's Nest stadium in Beijing needs an annual upkeep of US\$11 million, while Cape Town's World Cup Stadium requires US\$6 million, despite attempt to host social events and concerts. The cost of hosting mega-events is often expected

to compensate via tourism development. Tourism benefits mostly in terms of a renewed infrastructure, transport, sites; and branding. If host cities generally show a rise of tourist arrivals before the event, it is followed by a decline in the years after the event period [7]. There is no evidence of immediate tangible benefits of hosting mega event covering the total costs such as tourism growth or new industries. Instead, host cities benefit indirectly in their branding, and Olympic cities, on average, experience a 30 percent increase in international trade [27]. Tourism is often mentioned, in the pre-event euphoria, as a trump card for the post-event period. Contrary to the assumption, tourism doesn't grow automatically from the mega-event and might shows disappointing results in the post-event years, despite a strong brand promise. Evaluating the tangible and intangible benefits of mega-events in the long run remains a challenge for a destination

Case Studies of Mega-Event Host Cities

Methodology

A multiple case studies approach is adopted to compare metropolitan cities that hosted at least 2 mega-events in different Barcelona, Athens, Beijing, Singapore, Albertville and Turin. Impacts in past Olympic cities:

Athens and Beijing

Both cities share similarities; as capital cities, they relied heavily on national government, in funding and objectives. The priority was on the Games as national projects of pride and display of achievements, or celebration of heritage. Both accomplished major facelift: with metro, new airport, urban renewal, new hotels, convention centre, recreation, leisure and cultural enclaves. In other words, the infrastructure for Tourism was put in place and the society also evolved towards recreation. However, the focus on national and event focus left tourism systems incomplete. Athens city created bodies of tourism management and authority few years after the event, like a convention bureau, and the engagement of stakeholders remains limited. Athens illustrates the limited benefits, and ice-cream value of the Olympics legacy for tourism. The city inherited with performant public transport (metro, airport), and urban renewal. Games are considered to have accelerated the Greek government-debt crisis. The focus of these Games was to honor the History of the Olympics. With this focus the legacy planning on the urban fabric was not prioritized. Venues haven't worn well and some await costly renovation and requalification. The Olympic Complex was not planned for any use after the games. It remained vacant until it was decided to finance a costly renovation to turn it into a National Library and National Opera by 2015. The tourism integration of legacy was not planned either. It is only four years after the Olympic in 2008 that the City of Athens established the Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB), and a regulating and planning Athens Development and Destination Management Agency in charge of the Athens Project. The old organization of tourism administration, competing agencies, top-down policies and absence of a vision placing leisure and tourism at the centre of city renewal neutralized the benefits of the mega-event. It goes down to urban governance and planning issues.

Turin

Turin and its province hosted the Olympic Games in 2006. The Games were centralized towards this industrial city of 2 million, rather than towards the ski resorts. Mountain resorts like Bardonechia or Sestriere didn't benefit from the Olympics; neither in branding, investments or tourism growth. Although Turin lies in the plain, at

least 80 km away from the ski resort, it established itself as the winter capita and benefited greatly. More than US\$3.6 billion were spent in the city part of a larger effort to facelift the long-decaying industrial city and to reinvent itself as a vibrant urban destination (Figure 1).

Olympic venues have been reused for festivals, concerts, sport events and MICE activities in a clear ice cream economy strategy, materialized in tourism results after 2008. Turin reformed its tourism management, with the creation of the Turin Convention Bureau, to ensure the constant flow of events for the venues [37]. Turin was innovative in also setting up a Festival Bureau for Piedmont [38]. An event-themed, rather than event-led, approach facilitates a broad range of regeneration outcomes, whilst capitalizing on event links to generate interest and participation [31]. The cases of Athens, Barcelona, Turin have shown the different approaches to the importance of tourism for local economies. Post-event inertia is the major risk as much as the lack of connection and planning between mega-event and the destination's project and vision. In Barcelona the Olympics were integrated in the urban master plan and helped to create a powerful urban facelift. Tourism changes and innovation were mostly driven by flair and the spirit of stakeholders' management and transparency that guided the Games. Turin city learned both lessons from Barcelona, and used the Games to change the urban morphology as much as the tourism organization to integrate the ice cream economy. Singapore started from a reflection on tourism to change the city-state vision and to turn it into a global city ready for mega-events and tourism.

Barcelona

Barcelona's Olympic Games success in 1992 has made the city a good case study of urban and tourism transformation through

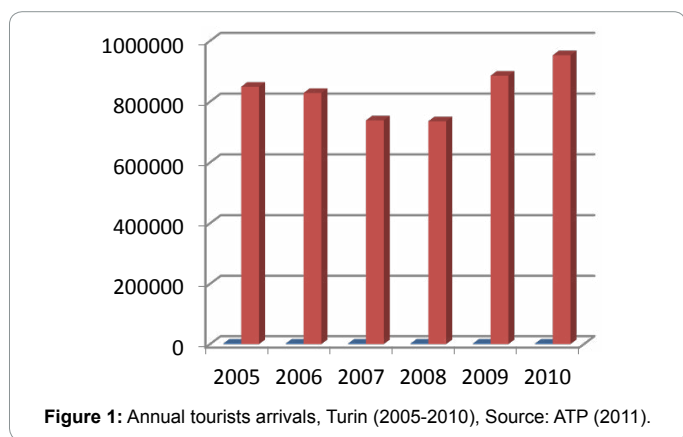


Figure 1: Annual tourists arrivals, Turin (2005-2010), Source: ATP (2011).

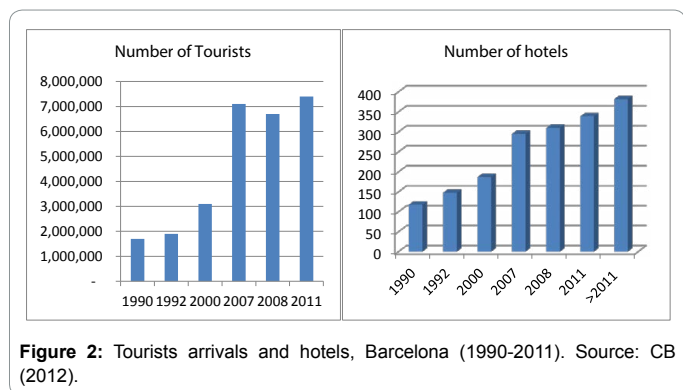


Figure 2: Tourists arrivals and hotels, Barcelona (1990-2011). Source: CB (2012).

mega-events. The overall objective for the city was clearly stipulated: "Transform the city into a world-class city". The Olympic project was integrated into the master plan without deviating from its objectives of a progressive urban regeneration plan started in 1979 [13]. It became a real accelerator towards completion. Furthermore stakeholders' management and transparency were coordinated to gain support under a larger goal: a cultural and economic renaissance of Catalonia through the games rather than the opposite. For that matter Barcelona Games were used as a platform of regional identity advocacy as much as a symbol of urban and cultural renewal. All this made it clear that the mega-event was serving the interest of the city first, without being jeopardizing the quality of the events. The success was determined by political leadership, governance, the depth of urban transformation, the involvement of Catalans (Figure 2).

It can be noticed that the branding of Barcelona has taken almost eight years to be translated in a solid results (Figure 1). Innovation was visible with tourism sector coordination (public-private), the creation of a tourism administration (Turisme de Barcelona) with specialized entities like Barcelona Promoció which was created to manage public venues (the Palau Sant Jordi, the Olympic Stadium, the Palau Municipal d'Esports, and the Velòdrom) for multiple uses with more than 70% for non-sport-related events [39]. That allowed further mega-event expertise and development and a continuous innovation in city promotion and tourism management [40-43]. The success of the planning was expressed by numbers. Since 2000, the numbers of arrivals have tripled, and the city is among the top five Convention city in Europe. More than twenty years after the Olympics, Barcelona's success story is expressed with the emphasis placed on tourism and ice-cream economy as significant part of the urban management.

Singapore

Singapore has followed suite and built an economy relying on culture, events, leisure, reinventing itself from a staid business hub to a global city and a tourism magnet in the name of competitiveness. Roy and Ong [41] argue that the Asian cities like Singapore have taken a global leader role in exemplifying new standards of urbanism. The Tourism Plan for 2015 advocated tourism integration into the urban project. Mega-events would benefit from being part of a wider strategy of touristification and regional planning project. The decision to build integrated resorts and to host an F1 Grand Prix and the Youth Olympic Games in 2010 set the path for mega-events and ice cream economy transformation. Tourism arrivals have shown a trend of significant growth after years of stagnation (Figure 1).

The case of Singapore differs from the others. Since the 2000s the city has embarked on a radical shift to become an open, creative city emphasizing arts, leisure and tourism to remain attractive and relevant. A new vision and master plan for urban tourism was elaborated in 2003 by the Singapore Tourism Board, in association with city master plan with clear objectives. The objectives were clearly stated: "Leading Convention and Exhibition City, Leading Asian Leisure Destination, and Services Centre of Asia". The implementation of the deliverables was articulated through major investments to establish the infrastructure and event support organization. That was accompanied with an emphasis on the ice cream economy: festivals, culture, sporting events (F1), arts, concerts, entertainment and gaming. The tourism results are significant. In a sense the YOG were more an offspring of the tourism and urban planning than the catalyst of change. Singapore can be seen as a model (Figure 3).

Integrating Ice-Cream Economy and Tourism Strategies in the City Planning

Destinations that have allowed tourism strategies and policies a more central role in the mega-event planning have shown more successful results over time. They have connected the strong infrastructure development brought by mega-events with enhanced tourism products and uses.

Barcelona, Turin and Singapore show 3 stages of integrating events into the tourism and regional planning. Barcelona really used the

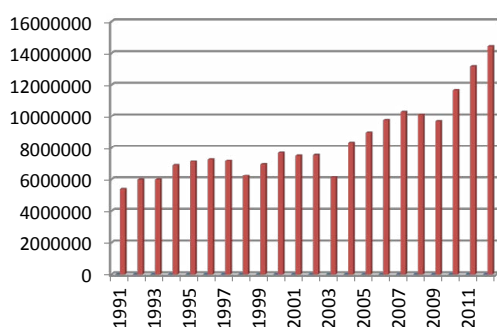


Figure 3: Tourists arrivals in Singapore (1991-2011), Source: STB (2013).

Olympics as part of an urban transformation programme, but reaped the benefits of tourism policies since the 2000's and globalization. Turin has emulated the example from Barcelona, while Singapore uses events in part of its strategic interests. With a different approach the ski resorts of Albertville, used the legacy in infrastructure and successfully use their brand independently. These destinations have shown that globalization has changed the nature of the relationship between destination, mega-event legacy and sustainability. The "ice cream economy" and tourism have grown to be engines of economies (Figure 4).

There are different types of innovations that can be derived from the mega-event legacy. The need to structure mega-events in a tourism and regional development strategy (especially for transports and public spaces) requires an authority to administrate the ice cream economy and economic transformation with regulating powers and budget (Figure 3). Mega-events bring modernized infrastructure, access, world class standards, branding developed with the event narratives. The Brand is developed, but the issue is to deliver on the promise, and recognizing the place of Tourism and Leisure role in the modern urban economy, rather than see it as secondary. Residents are active participant and actors and the talents must be developed. Human capital development is key for the success and engagement. Establishing efficient tourism governance with coordinating role and powers, engagement of the private sector and facilitation of innovation are factors of sustainability. Finally, the impact of technology in compressing time and space helps

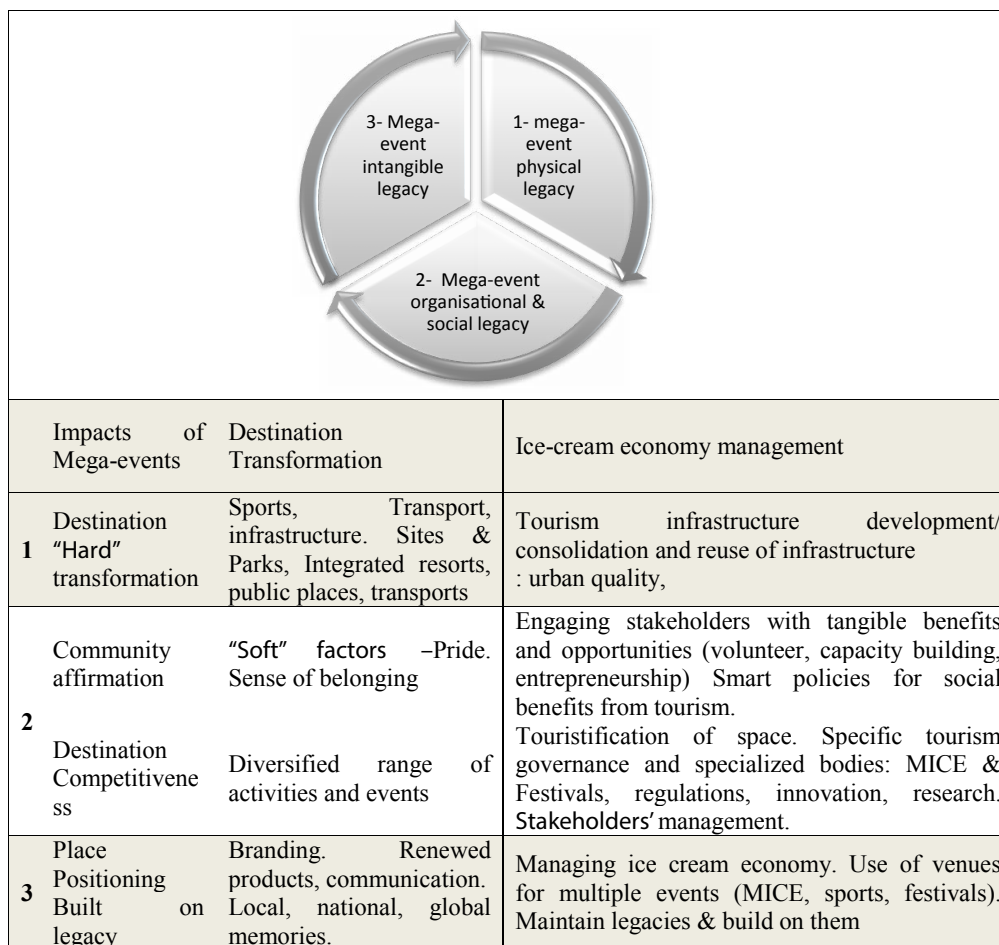


Figure 4: Mega-events legacy and ice-cream economy in city planning.

to change the perception of the place. That allows destinations to maintain their brand, with apps that tell the memories, stories of the destination and mega-event that we could call the augmented legacies. In this way, destinations are able to use the legacy of events, to write new narratives and continue to maintain their appeal. That could be the outcome of the three steps towards sustainability of a destination embedding tourism economy in the regional projects. The discussion shows that there is a need to find new tools to evaluate expectations from mega events as well as legacy.

Conclusion

This paper was developed from the perspective of the mega-event legacy. It argued for the need to integrate mega-events to the projects and planning of the host destination. The impacts of mega-events on the destination should be evaluated in the long term, over a period of ten years, given the importance of morphological, image and economic changes brought to the place. This paper has first reviewed and identified the changing environment of mega-events, and trends that have impacted the recent tensions related to them. Both event and destination are facing challenges related to globalization, and mega-event legacies show that their interests are often diverging. Destinations competitiveness and return on investment can only be measured through long-term benefits. The morphological and branding legacies are much recognized, while the community engagement, social benefits and governance opportunities are not systematically developed by post-event destinations. In conclusion, it can be said that global changes are affecting destinations. They all consider mega-events to be a catalyst of the overall local and regional ambitions rather than the only goal. Now mega-events have become a means towards the end, which is sustainable development. However, how to use the legacies left by the mega-events remain a matter of discussion. Destinations understand the role of tourism as central to their interests, given the place taken by leisure, creativity, and events in cities, but haven't radically changed their strategies to place tourism and the Ice-cream economy at the core of long term projects and planning. Destination need to strategically re-think their vision and ambitions and to integrate the management of the ice cream economy to remain competitive. City management and destination management overlap in some aspects, and call for a key role of tourism governance in the regional planning. Through the examples discussed, further research needs to be conducted in destination tourism governance, and assessment of the present destinations economy. The cases of destinations discussed showed that managing the "ice cream economy" is possible whether for ski resorts or large cities, with a clear long term tourism vision and plan for it. This might be one of the challenges for destinations: defining the expectations from tourism and mega-events.

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