

ANALYSIS OF IMPACT OF BAKU EUROPEAN OLYMPIC GAMES ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN AZERBAIJAN

Narmin Nazirova | Turiba University

Abstract

The Olympic Games have also been viewed as large scale cultural events that have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance as they provide a first class opportunity to create a forum for understanding and respecting different values and traditions and celebrating cultural diversity. Undoubtedly, the Olympic Games can help raise the profile of the host nation and contribute to the 'feel-good' factor of the host city's population.

Introduction

Hosting the Olympic Games is often viewed as a means of raising a nation's sporting profile as well as a tool for economic development, social regeneration and cultural integration. The Olympic Games are regarded as the world's most prestigious sporting occasion and have been documented as a significant catalyst for urban regeneration and as a means of enhancing a city's landscape and physical appearance. Staging the Olympic Games necessitates refurbishment of existing, and construction of new, sporting facilities and supporting infrastructure such as an Olympic Village, new housing, parks, recreational areas and transport links, all of which can become legacies for the host community when the Games are over.

Event tourism

In the context of tourism, one subject of particular interest is planned events. As seen in Jafari citing Boorstin (1961 in 2000), planned events can be those carried out just once or those celebrated on a regular basis, and both of them are related to the marketing destination and the promotion of the particular area. In the case of the one-time events, the sense of the unusual experience is part of the attraction and in case of the periodic events, their periodicity and program are their major characteristics.

The size of the event is also an important aspect to bear in mind at the time of planning because of the impacts they directly entail. Small local communities facing "mega events" can cause a situation where the community is completely overwhelmed. This is because event tourism is a good option to develop destinations, but it is extremely important to link the concept of sustainable development with the planning process of the event (Delamere 2001b).

The events can be studied from two points of view according to Jafari (2000). On one hand, they are important from planners, developers and marketers point on view, in order to develop the events as tourist attractions and contribute to the consolidation of a better destination's image. On the other hand, the demand side is present because is the potential public attending the event; hence, without them the event does not have any sense.

Events and festivals have been used traditionally as a way to enhance areas and regions under the problematic of seasonality with a productive result. Taking into account Janeczko, Mules and Ritchie (2002) festivals encourage tourists to visit the particular region but also to stay longer once they are at the destination. In special cases like small cities where the average stay is two nights, by organizing this kind of events the average stay can increase by adding a couple of days, depending on the length of the event.

Moreover, during the last decades, an increasing number of festivals and special events have appeared, giving the opportunity to the host communities of sharing their culture with the guests. Always according to Jafari (2000), special events are those which are “occurring outside the normal program or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body”. That is related to the fact that for the visitors, the experience is unusual and unique and at the same time, the event can meet a wide range of objectives where the economic welfare and the community development are two of the most important at the time of planning these types of events.

Therefore, event management has to look after other issues similarly important to the final success of the event. Marketing, operations, administration and risk management are key factors to bear in mind at the time of planning an event of any kind, along with financing issues, sponsoring and publicity. The management approach depends on the philosophy of the particular event, and so does the funding, depending on its ownership (public, private or non-profit), where public events traditionally have had access to government grants and private events are to a great extent funded by sponsors and private enterprises, although there are particular cases where both systems are mixed and consequently the funding comes from various sources (Andersson and Getz, 2009).

Mega events

A mega-event is large-scale, internationally sponsored, public entrepreneurship activity engaging a long-term multi-sector organization within the host city and nation with the double goal of supporting overall local and regional development and advancing universal values and principles to meet global challenges (Bowdin et al 2006).

Mega-events are:

- Place-making activities that help to redefine and reposition a city
- Assigned by international bodies to a “deserving” city after a bidding process
- A local and a global mandate to cooperate on key challenges and urban improvement.

These combined elements are essential to explain their “transformational” capabilities: mega events bring an injection of new international investments often concentrated in a very short period of time. At the same time they force a city to develop new activities that contribute to re-shape and strengthen its identity from many perspectives, including: cultural, social, economic, sporting, political, etc (Dwyer et al 2001).

Sports tourism

The sports travel industry consists of many different forms of individual and team travel. There are regular season professional, collegiate, and scholastic events. There are championship events and an entire universe of participation based amateur events. Some travelers are part of a team, while others are parents and family of competitors: they are along to support their family member(s) and also enjoy the trip itself. Still others travel to participate in activities like climbing, camping, cycling, scuba diving, tennis, golf, birding, hunting and fishing. Nostalgia also plays a role: visits to sports halls of fame, participation in a fantasy camp, and tours of famous sports facilities. Still other travelers decide to purchase tickets to an event during a trip made for a very different reason (a business person goes to a baseball game while on a business trip) (Brent 1984) All can be included in the sports travel industry.

Sports travel shares some of the characteristics of traditional tourism: if the purpose of a trip is to participate in an individual sports activity like golf, the benefits of the area to golfers are the message (Dunn, McGuirk). Golfers are targeted through media like the magazines they read and tournaments they watch. This area of sports tourism remains the focus of destination marketing professionals and the venues they serve. Team travel or an individual travelling to compete in an event can present quite different circumstances (Getz 1989).

To prepare for and run the event can take many months and sometimes years, some of the works done before the event itself are:

- A local organizing committee is staffed
- Fields or courts found, evaluated, scheduled and prepared
- Courses established and outlined
- Suitable accommodations found
- Brackets prepared
- Tickets and sponsorships need to be sold

Research Methodology

In the following chapter the research methodology, research implementation process and the qualitative and quantitative methods will be explained.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods

Qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis have gained popularity over the years. Traditionally, it has been the method used by researchers to build theory, although is not the case of every one of them, as knowledge manifests itself in many forms (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Following Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.10), qualitative research means “ any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or means of quantification” That means that this methodology is focused on issues that quantitative research approach does not cover, such as lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, feelings as well as social movements, cultural phenomena, interactions among groups, etc.. It means collecting data from interviews and observations with the aim of finding out new concepts or relationships and organize them in a framework, model or theory basis.

It is important to highlight that there is not a “correct” method to collect data. Strategies for collecting information depend widely on the theory formulated before the research, the level of social interaction needed, the type of information searched, the resources available for the research process and the accessibility to groups or individuals at the moment of carrying out the investigation. (Gray et al , 2003)

Next definition (2002 cited in Muijs, 2004 p.11), defines quantitative research as the “explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)”. But to carry out a quantitative research, quantitative data is needed. According to Gray et al (2003) quantitative data use numbers to describe what exists, and the benefit arising from that methodology is the fact that the data may be fed into a computer where they can be counted, stored, and manipulated; however, numbers are often a poor substitute for a researcher’s vivid descriptions. Moreover, there is a tendency to

consider quantitative data collected as scientific facts while it is a technique like any other that can have potential errors at the time of its measure.

Anyway, the use of numbers make studies easier to replicate, making the results more reliable at the time of the validation and makes it possible to generalize.

Questionnaire surveys

According to Brace (2004), questionnaires are a useful tool when resources are limited as it is quite cheap to administer. At the same time, it is not as time-consuming as for example interviews, moreover if the questionnaire is self-completed using methods such as email or postal surveys. In addition to that, one of its basic characteristics is the privacy of respondents, a key factor to the respondents answer freely and honestly. Finally, it is the perfect secondary tool to confirm previous findings on the field of study.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviewing, according to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), is best used when you won't get more than one chance to interview someone and when you will be sending several interviewers out into the field to collect data. The semi-structured interview guide provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data.

Semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing in order to allow the researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. The inclusion of open-ended questions and training of interviewers to follow relevant topics that may stray from the interview guide does, however, still provide the opportunity for identifying new ways of seeing and understanding the topic at hand.

The research methodology and implementation process

There is a big variety of methodologies available for the researchers at the time of studying a certain topic. Biggest part of it consists of the collection of data, both from secondary and primary sources. In this particular research, the kind of methodology used by the researcher consists of primary data collection: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews. In addition to that secondary data has been used from the previous available resources. Furthermore, the primary data was obtained through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in order to clarify the data obtained through the secondary source.

Impact of Baku European Olympic Games on Tourism Development in Azerbaijan

This following chapter is intended to reveal the true impact of Baku European Games on tourism in Azerbaijan.

Characteristics of European Olympic Games in Baku

Baku was awarded the right to host the first European Games at the 41st EOC General Assembly in Rome, on 8 December 2012. The 1st European Olympic Games took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 12 to 28 June 2015, and featured almost 6,000 athletes from 50 countries competing in 20 sports. (Participants". Baku2015.com)

The primary aim of the event was to celebrate the achievements of the athletes who inspire people of not only European nations, and the BEGOC was (Baku European Games Operation Committee) determined to grasp this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a profound, positive and lasting impact on millions of people around Azerbaijan and across the world.

The other aim was to bring Baku Games into the center of attention: exposing sport in existing landscape settings and freshly built venues, full of spectators and with a great atmosphere; excitement and innovation throughout Baku; community involvement and social impact; the inspiration for young people; and the social, physical and economic features which transforming whole communities through the power of sport.

BEGOC had a big success in its recruitment of volunteer candidates. With 16,000 registrations for approximately 12,000 roles, the interview process has started and BEGOC is working to match volunteer candidates with the appropriate skills and interests with Games-time positions. These volunteers will be known as Flamekeepers, a name that reflects the volunteers' central role in promoting the spirit of the event and is also an homage to Azerbaijan, the Land of Fire, and the passion and warmth of its people. ("Baku 2015 European Games volunteers to be called Flamekeepers")

Analysis of Baku European Olympic Games Impact on Tourism Development in Azerbaijan

As it can be assumed from the title of the subchapter, this part of study is dedicated to find out the impact made by the Olympic Games on the tourism development in Azerbaijan. The information used in this part is obtained through the results of the questionnaire which were answered by 57 participants. Those questionnaire surveys were mainly distributed online among the local residents of Azerbaijan.

Overall, questionnaire consisted of two parts: questions which help to identify the demographic profile of the respondents and the main questions which are related to the topic, and will be used for drawing conclusions and recommendations.

Variables	Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	34	59%
	Female	23	41%
Marital Status	Single	23	40%
	Married	28	49%
	Divorced	5	9%
	Widowed	1	2%
Age	Under 18	5	9%
	18-24	12	21%
	25-34	17	29%
	35-44	11	19%
	45-54	7	10%
	55-64	5	8%
Level of education	Older than 64	2	4%
	School until 9th grade-	3	5%

	High school graduate, diploma	17	30%
	Bachelor's degree	31	54%
	Master's degree	5	9%
	Doctorate degree	1	2%

Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants

The demographic profile of the respondents was as following: 34 males (59%) and 23 females (41%). Majority of the participants were married- 28 participant (49%); 23 single (40%), divorced 5 people (9%), widowed 1 participant (2%). As for the age group only 5 people were under 18; 12 participants' age was between 18-24, 17 were aged between 25-34, followed by 11 being 35-44, 7 were between 45-54, 5 people were between 55-64 and only 2 were older than 4 years. And the level of education obtained by the participants only 3 had school certificate for 9th grade, followed by 17 who was high school graduate, big majority- 31 people had bachelor's degree, next 5 people had master's degree, and only had achieved a doctorate degree.

Variables	Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Knowledge of event	Yes	57	100%
	No	0	0%
Level of involvement	Spectator	12	21%
	Volunteer	11	19%
	Directly employed	19	33%
	Other	15	27%
Attendance to the event	Yes	38	67%
	No	19	33%

Table 2: Main questions and data obtained through them

When it comes to the main question which will help to make relevant conclusion and recommendations, all 57 participants knew about the Olympic Games, which shows very effective marketing and promotion strategies of the event. For the level of involvement 12 participant were spectators, 11 people were volunteers at the Games majority was directly employed by the Olympic Committee, and 15 people were involved in the Games either indirectly or in other ways, therefore, 38 of the participant which is the biggest majority attended to the event and only 19 have not attended.

Statement	Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Provided increase of employment opportunities	Disagree	8	14%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	15	26%
	Agree	34	60%
Promoted country as tourism destination	Disagree	7	12%

	Neither agree, nor disagree	12	21%
	Agree	38	67%
Caused increase in price levels in tourism and hospitality sector Baku during the event	Disagree	25	43%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	9	16%
	Agree	23	40%
Provided development of new public facilities which can be used by local residents	Disagree	18	31%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	11	19%
	Agree	28	49%
Caused overcrowding of local tourism facilities during the event	Disagree	15	26%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	19	33%
	Agree	23	41%
Caused inconvenience for local residents due to increased intensive traffic	Disagree	14	25%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	15	26%
	Agree	28	49%
Disrupted Baku's residents' peace and everyday life comfort	Disagree	21	37%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	17	30%
	Agree	19	33%
Caused higher levels of criminality in Baku during the games period	Disagree	37	65%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	14	25%
	Agree	6	10%
Enhanced Baku's international identity through global media	Disagree	2	4%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	16	28%
	Agree	39	68%
Overall positive impacts overweighed the negative impacts	Disagree	11	19%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	19	33%
	Agree	27	48%
Industry I have worked at Olympics period was involved and benefited from the Games	Disagree	25	44%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	11	19%
	Agree	21	37%
Games increased my family income	Disagree	25	44%

	Neither agree, nor disagree	0	0%
	Agree	32	56%
Satisfied from the Games overall	Disagree	12	21%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	18	32%
	Agree	27	47%
Baku should host more international mega- events	Disagree	18	32%
	Neither agree, nor disagree	10	17%
	Agree	29	51%

Table 3: Main questions and data obtained through them

Further questions were based series of statements and the personal feelings and experience of the participants regarding the Olympic Games, the answer are rated as Disagree; Neither agree, nor disagree; and Agree.

First statement was the Games providing the increase of employment opportunities with which 34 people agreed, saying that lots of new work places and facilities have been opened, and there were lots of job opportunities in the Games as well; 15 people took the neutral position answering “Neither agree, nor disagree” because they didn’t really feel any difference; and only 8 people disagreed with the statement. Second statement was about the promotion of country as tourism destination which majority- 37 people agreed on, the event really have brought attention from the overseas and promoted Azerbaijan; 12 people stayed neutral; and 7 disagreed.

Third statement about Games caused increase in price levels in tourism and hospitality sector Baku during the event with which 25 have disagreed saying they didn’t really feel much difference, 9 people stayed neutral, and 23 people agreed saying that there was an increase in the prices of tourism and hospitality industry- especially city resorts. Next statement Olympics providing development of new public facilities which can be used by local residents with which 18 people disagreed, 11 people did neither and 28 people agreed, followed by the statement that games overcrowding of local tourism facilities during the event 15 people disagreed, majority- 23 people agreed saying that it was very hard to get to some of the resort areas, especially the beaches. In addition to that some of the public transportation had limited or changed routes which has caused big overcrowding on the available transportation and big inconvenience in general, and 15 people chose neither of the sides.

The games also seemed to cause inconvenience for local residents due to increased intensive traffic as 28 people agreed with that saying that four times throughout the games the roads have been completely closed in the center area, and majority of the people had to walk big distance in order to get home, work or another places desired, 14 people disagreed and 15 said nothing about that, which led to the disruption of the Baku’s residents’ peace and everyday life comfort, with which 19 people agreed, 21 participants disagreed and 17 chose neither. The Games seemed to lower the level of criminality in the city, as there was boosted security regime at the Games period. The Games have brought attention of biggest international media platforms, which have enhanced the attention, majority of the participants agreed- 39 people, only 2 disagreed, and 16 people were not sure.

21 of the participants have worked in an industry that was involved with the Games either directly, 25 didn't, and 11 people's working sector was involved with the Games indirectly, leading to the conclusion that for 32 people the Olympics have brought family income and financial benefit, and for the rest 25 it didn't. According to the 27 people the positive impacts outweighed the negative impacts, and the same number of people agreed that they were satisfied with the Games overall, while 12 people disagreed, and rest 18 chose neither of the options. For the last statement whether Baku should host more international mega events 29 people agreed that Baku should total do more, but with taking in account the smallest details beforehand, 18 people were against that, and only 10 chose neither of the options.

Conclusions:

1. After careful analysis of the answers of the respondents who have replied to the questionnaire surveys with their answer flowing conclusions can be drawn. First conclusion was that the Games have caused inconvenience for local residents due to increased intensive traffic. This was very inconvenient, because it was the summertime, and very hot evenings.

2. Second conclusion that has to be mentioned was the fast the Olympic Games indirectly caused an increase in the prices of tourism and hospitality industry- especially city resorts. It is indirectly because the places are not owned by the government but the private owners. Because of their desire to own more out of the foreign tourists they have lost some of their local clientele who got scared of the unfair high prices.

3. Third conclusion made is the overcrowding of tourism facilities, and not only those but the transportation. It was very hard to get to some of the resort areas, especially the beaches. In addition to that some of the public transportation had limited or changed routes which has caused big overcrowding on the available transportation and big inconvenience in general.

4. Drawing the final line, according to the general opinion of the respondents Baku should host more international events, as in 2012 Eurovision had caught attention of the European market.

Recommendations:

1. After the conclusion were stated the relevant recommendations were made accordingly. Firstly, if government wants to stage such an international event as the European Olympic Games they have to take in account local people too as more as the tourists and foreign guests, by providing convenience and comfort for both. The roads might be closed, but there should be alternative roads and transport provided for people who live in that area.

2. Secondly, the prices have to be controlled by the governmental bodies, although the businesses are mostly private. It's not fair to raise the prices to get most out of the tourists, as the market of the businesses are still the local people. If the businesses continue that on, they can lose their loyal customer base.

3. Third recommendation would be that more tourism facilities have to be built, and in addition to that the ones that already exist have to be more organized and prepared to accept big amount of guests and customers. The number of transport available should be increased in those days as the number of the customers increase in times because in addition to the locals the tourists use the public transport too.

4. The last, but not the least, Azerbaijan surely is capable of, and should host more international events, because it makes the country more known and popular, which attracts more tourists and potential customers. But, government has to think about even the smallest details beforehand, in order to both sides- the locals: the business owners and the customers, local residents; and the foreign visitor to stay satisfied.

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