

The Role and Impact of Sporting Mega-Events in the Context of Soft Power

Subjects: [Hospitality](#), [Leisure](#), [Sport & Tourism](#)

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“Mega-events” are characterized as expansive cultural gatherings. They include both sporting and commercial elements, and they collectively exert significant global influence and appeal. “Sporting mega-events”, in particular, represent a central component of such gatherings and serve as key expressions of national soft power on the world stage. “Soft power” encompasses practices and behaviors aimed at cultivating relational capital, and according to Nye, effective soft power strategies rely on streamlined processes and a blend of tangible and intangible resources to communicate influence, negotiate power, and achieve desired outcomes. In the context of sporting mega-events, soft power operates through cooperation and the alignment of shared interests rather than coercion, thereby appealing to international audiences, and governments therefore strategically host these events to enhance their global standing and secure diplomatic and economic benefits.

sporting mega-event

soft power

global visibility

national identity

urban transformation

economic impact

sustainability

Sporting mega-events, such as the Olympics and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, are powerful platforms for cities and nations to assert their global presence. Maurice Roche defines mega-events as “large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal, and international significance” ^[1]. Distinguished by their large scale, significant investments, and extensive media coverage, they offer host cities the opportunity to showcase their culture and economic aspirations. According to Azzali ^[2], while the concept of mega-events has been around since the 1960s, such sporting events have increasingly become central to strategies aimed at driving urban transformation, boosting tourism, and enhancing international reputation. Despite challenges related to costs, and the connected controversies that can occur, nations continue to pursue these events, seeing them as catalysts for long-term development and soft power enhancement ^[2].

This paper explores the role and impact of sporting mega-events as significant platforms for economic, cultural, and political influence, highlighting their importance in advancing soft power strategies. It provides a thorough analysis of the defining characteristics of mega-events, their historical evolution, and their socio-economic and urban impacts. Additionally, the paper considers the challenges related to hosting these events and the long-term legacies that can be achieved.

Divided into thematic sections, the paper begins by defining mega-events and discussing their various dimensions. It then explores their use as instruments of soft power and considers the broader implications for host nations.

Finally, case study examples of sporting mega-events are discussed.

References

1. Roche, M. *Megaevents and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*; Routledge: London, UK, 2000; ISBN 978-0-203-44394-1.
2. Azzali, S. Challenges and Key Factors in Planning Legacies of Mega Sporting Events. *Archnet-IJAR Int. J. Archit. Res.* 2019, 14, 203–218.

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