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What a Waste!

Stakeholder engagement and sports event waste management: An analysis on operational efficiency

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Introduction

Waste management is an integral part of a green event and crucial to its environmental credentials (McCullough *et al.*, 2016; Verdonk *et al.*, 2017). Conventional waste management studies focus on municipal waste collection (Schneider *et al.*, 2017); waste separation behaviour (Stoeva & Alriksson, 2017); intervention strategies (Shearer *et al.*, 2016) and governance-related challenges (Kromidha *et al.*, 2019). But as green events become more prevalent, research on the waste management of events is gaining momentum (Wall-Tweedie & Nguyen, 2018; Han *et al.*, 2015; Barber *et al.*, 2014; Mair & Laing, 2013). Waste management is the most visible green measure in sports events. It is also relatively low cost, compared to the incorporation of eco-designs in the construction or retro-fitting of sport facilities (Hedayati *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, it is easier to promote recycling than to engage with transportation stakeholders to address the carbon footprint of non-domestic travel in sports tourism (Wicker, 2017).

The implementation of waste separation at major sports events requires substantive stakeholder involvement in undertaking various, and at time, conflicting actions. This is, however, fraught with challenges in terms of: the division of tasks; the establishment of communicational channels; the provision of infrastructural support; and the creation of participation roadmaps. This chapter examines how stakeholders (including government agencies, businesses and contractors, spectators, sponsors, and volunteers) have managed a waste separation program of a major sports event, i.e., the 29th South East Asia Games (SEA Games) hosted by Malaysia in 2017. It does so by identifying and examining these stakeholders' roles longitudinally (from pre-event, during event to the post-event stage), in order to analyse the challenges and impacts, resources required, and activities performed in undertaking these roles. It also examines: communication measures; infrastructural support; and the administrative hurdles involved. The

stakeholders' awareness of the repercussion of their actions is also examined. The purpose is to demonstrate the importance of these stakeholders' engagement to an event, through relational ties and interactions. The chapter is mainly informed by a study which was made possible by our experience as volunteer coordinators for 2017 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games. The ethnographic study focused on the waste management process at the SEA Games venue, the Bukit Jalil National Stadium (Bukit Jalil).

The case study revealed that poor stakeholder engagement: hampered participation and contributions; led to inefficient and flawed designs; compromised administrative and operational procedures; and undermined stakeholders' credibility and confidence. Pre-event, the top-down planning approach among the core implementers inhibited consultation vital to the design of the waste separation processes. During the event, the repercussion surfaced in the form of infrastructural weaknesses, whereby the inconsistent bin-system, the haphazard bin placement and the lack of recycling facilities for vendors decreased convenience and negatively impacted on recycling behaviour. Operational errors in the collection and transportation of waste often hindered the identification of waste-type, which caused a significant proportion of collected bags to be consigned as non-recyclables. In terms of patron education, insufficient on-site publicity of the recycling initiatives curtailed the educational opportunities of the sports event. The main stakeholders' awareness of their action was arguably low, in view that some operational errors could have been identified or avoided with timely input from other stakeholders. Post-event, poor communication and coordination still characterized the stakeholder relations such that the sharing of experiences and corrective action were lacking.

The SEA Games Green Initiatives

The SEA Games is a biennial sports event for the athletes of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries. Malaysia hosted the 29th SEA Games from 19th to 30th August 2017 with the brand name 'Kuala Lumpur 2017' (KL 2017, 2017). The country's Ministry for Youth and Sports dubbed Kuala Lumpur 2017 the first 'Green Games' in Southeast Asia (Channel News Asia, 2017), as the host officially embraced green initiatives with the goal of inspiring change of behaviour among fans and volunteers.

The Malaysian Organizing Committee (MASOC) oversaw the overall staging of the SEA Games, whereas the Green Initiative Sub Committee (GISC) was responsible for the actualization of the green measures (KL 2017, 2017). The Kuala Lumpur 2017 green initiatives included: the promotion of public transportation as the mode of travel; the reduction of energy consumption and CO₂ emission; waste separation and recycling; and in-situ composting. Various stakeholders were engaged to plan and implement the green initiatives, notably the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Corporation (SWCorp), which was