

A turning point? Evaluating the impact of the 2019 FIFA Women World Cup in France on sports' clubs in host cities

Guillaume BODET (University Lyon 1, France)

Cécile OTTOGALLI-MAZZACAVALLLO (University Lyon 1, France)

Aurélié EPRON (University Lyon 1, France)

Virginie NICAISE (University Lyon 1, France)

Aim and objectives

The impact and legacy of major sport events remain an important issue, for public and sport decision-makers, local communities as well as for the academic community (Preuss, 2015). This question is particularly important as existing knowledge does not universally support strong impact and legacies (Thompson et al., 2019), and that sport events are intrinsically extremely diverse and are hosted in similarly diverse context and locations (Spaaij, 2009). One growing objective, and thus justification, for organising sporting events relates to the social impact/legacy they can have (Chalip, 2008). For this reason, and responding to a call from the Local Organising Committee of the FIFA WWC France 2019, this study aimed to evaluate the impact of the event on sports clubs – football and non-football in France, which is one component of event legacy (Preuss, 2019). The event studied is particularly interesting considering that women's sporting events have been understudied and that women's football have been rapidly developing in terms of participation, image and media attention (Hallmann, 2012).

Methodology

The methodology followed a two-phase process. First, a questionnaire was conveniently administrated to sport clubs of the 9 hosting and 1 non-hosting city. The main goal was to characterize the situation of women and the club's policy regarding women's participation. The sample includes 96 clubs, comprising 17 football clubs. The second step based on phone interviews with club's board members, aimed to evaluate the WWC's specific impact on their club. The convenient sample is made of 60 clubs, comprising 3 football and 3 non-football clubs in each of the 10 cities.

Findings

The phase-1 results showed that only a minority of clubs had a formal engagement towards the promotion of women sports, but half of them declared having dedicated actions to promote gender equality. Overall, the phase-2 results indicate that although the event was very well received in the host cities it did not have any perceived impact on non-football clubs. If football clubs estimate that the event changed images and perceptions of women's football, they rarely observed an impact in their club, mainly through the arrival of few (< 10) women participants. Few declared wanting to develop more programmes in the near future, either because they perceive they already do a lot, or because they lack resources, especially, volunteers and training slots.

Funding: the Local Organizing Committee of the FIFA WWC France 2019 funded this research.

Acknowledgments: the research team would like to thank the Local Organizing Committee of the FIFA WWC France 2019 and the French Football Federation for their support.