
Measuring the Non-Tangible Legacy of Sport Events: The Case of the 2018 FIFA World Cup

Tatiana Skryl¹, Elena Gureeva²

Abstract:

The article studies non-tangible legacy of a sports event, in particular it focuses on the official mascot of an event that is regarded as a carrier of cultural and commercial components.

The main aim is to pinpoint the significance of the official mascot for fans and to assess the demand for products, showcasing the official mascot, as exemplified by 2018 FIFA World Cup, held in Russia, as well as sales revenues from such products.

The study came up with the following results: 1) the fans from different countries tend to spend differently on the souvenirs with official symbols 2) the products, showcasing the event's mascot are most popular 3) the revenues from selling the souvenirs, showcasing Zabivaka the wolf, the official mascot of 2018 FIFA World Cup, totaled over 50m euro.

In conclusion, the article suggests recommendations on how to design souvenirs, showing the event's official mascot in order to maximize their cultural and commercial values.

Keywords: *Sports event, non-tangible legacy, mascot, commercialization, economic efficiency, culture.*

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¹Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Russia, t_skryl@mail.ru

²Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Russia, makarova_ea@mail.ru

1. Introduction

Over the last several years Russia has become the host of a few large scale sports events, including the XXII Winter Olympic Games – Sochi 2014, the XI Winter Paralympic Games and the 2018 FIFA World Cup. Even one such a huge event alone may cause multiple questions as for the reasons to hold it and whether it was socially and economically efficient (Zillmann *et al.*, 1989). A special focus is put on how to further use the legacy of such events (Alekseeva, 2014).

Despite the fact that the first mascots of sports events emerged no earlier than a half a century ago, it has become a must for any big scale sport event (Raney, 2006; Grima *et al.*, 2017). Its design and outlook are strictly regulated by competent international sports organizations (Boen *et al.*, 2002). The mascot of a sports event, as translated from French, means any item, or a man or an animal that brings luck (Scelles and Andreff, 2017).

The history of the mascot as a separate element of a sports event goes back to 1966, when the World Cup held in England celebrated the first mascot – World Cup Willie the lion (Seat *et al.*, 2017). Willie the lion brought luck both to the English team, helping it to win, and to the Soviet team, which was placed 4th – the feat that remains unequalled ever since (Bryant *et al.*, 1982). Willie not only triggered emotions and joy from among the fans but also helped its creator to pocket 6.7m pounds of commercial income (Papanastasiou and Fourlas, 2016).

The USA, hosting the World Cup in 1994, set the record of historically high revenues from selling the souvenirs showcasing the official mascots and symbols. Striker, the World Cup Pup, created by world renowned Walt Disney studio, was selected the official mascot and brought the organizers more than 11m US dollars of revenue. But this record was beaten and the figure exceeded more than 2.5 times the very next World Cup, held in France in 1998. The souvenirs, portraying Footix, the cockerel, let the organizers earn more than 27m US dollars (Hallmann *et al.*, 2013).

It should be noted that not always the souvenirs, showing the mascots are popular (Wann *et al.*, 2008). The worst-selling ones were the official mascots of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, held in Japan and South Korea- Atmo, Nik and Kaz, the Spheriks. The first ever interactive mascots were created by computer technologies and impressed the fans but didn't sell well (Lee *et al.*, 2015).

The marketing program of the XXII Winter Olympic Games-Sochi 2014 set a historical record of 1.3bln US dollars, whereas the official goods of the Games were sold for 500m dollars and Sochi 2014 licensed goods brought about more than 30m dollars. 3.6m mascots were sold, including over 1 million of most popular white polar bears (Persson and Persson, 2014).

The research aims at pinpointing the significance of the official mascot for fans and to assess the demand for products, showcasing the official mascot, as exemplified by 2018 FIFA World Cup, held in Russia, as well as sales revenues from such products.

2. Literature Review

The definitions for and assessing of the legacy of large-scale sport events are covered by a number of Russian and foreign publications. Cashman for instance singles out 6 components of sports legacy (Cashman, 2005):

- economics;
- infrastructure;
- information and education;
- public life, politics and culture;
- sports;
- symbols, memory and history.

Another prominent academic, Hochschild (1979), adds to that list such intangible components as emotions and connections. He believes that the emotions, that are regular for such events, make people proud of their city and their country, inspire them and help to revive the region. Cialdini *et al.* (1972) may be named among the well-known researches who focus on that topic. They also identify an intangible part and a cultural component in the legacy of a sports event. We believe that the mascot is the epitome of the intangible legacy of a sports event (Gureeva *et al.*, 2017).

Nowadays, when selling the licensed products, the organizers benefit mostly from the sales of the souvenirs, showing the mascots (Cottingham, 2012). According to PwC the global sports industry receives the following revenues (Changing the Game. Study by PricewaterhouseCoopers):

- sponsorship 31%;
- ticketing 31%;
- broadcasting rights 24%;
- licensed products sales 14%.

3. Methodology

This study is based on the polls, held by Nielsen company and the study authors. Among the main indicators were:

- a) how much the fans from different countries were ready to spend on the products with the event's symbols;
- b) number of fans from a given country, who came to the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

The total amount of money, spent on purchasing the goods with the event's symbols, was calculated using the formula:

$$I_t = \sum x_i y_i$$

where:

I_t - the total amount of money, spent on purchasing the goods with the event's symbols;

x_i - the amount of money that the fans from country "i" are ready to spend on goods with the event's symbols;

y_i - the number of fans from country "i", who came to the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the study, Zabivaka the wolf as the official mascot of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia was supported by 93% of surveyed Russians and more than 30% of them planned to buy a product, showcasing it (Table 1).

Table 1. Share of the population of the 2018 FIFA World Cup host cities who plan to buy the official mascot

No.	City	Share
1	Moscow	26
2	Kaliningrad	31
3	St. Petersburg	29
4	Rostov on Don	28
5	Sochi	39
6	Volgograd	31
7	Yekaterinburg	32
8	Kazan	33
9	Nizhniy Novgorod	43
10	Samara	46
11	Saransk	28

Source: Authors calculations.

The Russian fans as the hosts of the World Cup proved to be most loyal buyers of the souvenirs. It should be noted that the fans from different countries vary in their attitude towards souvenirs and the amounts of money they are ready to spend on them. The study held by ING showed that most generous are the fans from Russia and Argentina, as they were ready to spend 48 euro on the average on the souvenirs with the event's symbols. At the same time, the Dutch fans would limit this amount to 5 euro (Table 2).

Table 2. How much the fans from different countries are ready to spend on the products with the event's symbols

Place	Country	Amount, euro
1-2	Argentina/Russia	48
3	Brazil	40
4	Chile	38
5	Italy	32
6	Spain	31
7	South Korea	29
8-9	Australia/Germany	17
10 - 11	The UK/France	16
12	Portugal	15
13-14	Belgium/ the USA	12
15	the Netherlands	5

Source: Authors calculations.

Taking into account the number of fans from various countries, who attended the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia (Table 3), we can assume that all in all the fans have spent over 50m euro on the souvenirs, depicting the event's symbols.

Table 3. Number of fans from various countries, who attended the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia

Place	Country	Number, thousand
1	Russia	980
2	China	53
3	the USA	46
4	Mexico	41
5	Argentina	31
6	Brazil	27
7	the UK/Germany	31
8	Columbia	23
9	Peru/France	20
10	Croatia	18

Source: Authors calculations.

A souvenir is a way to express one's patriotism and pride for the team and the country. A licensed product, including the event's mascot, helps the fans to feel being a part of the event. The mascot is first and foremost something to unite the fans as it expresses their shared values.

Unique features and values are typical not only of the event's mascot, but also of the mascots of clubs and teams. Therefore these values are transmitted onto respective licensed products, that depict them. This type of products are applicable not only for competitive positioning, but also for the fan's perceptive positioning. Such an approach will pinpoint some remarkable features of the product, that will be most

attractive for the target market. Unorthodox licensed products, unparalleled by products of other clubs not only boost the demand for them, but also favorably position the club in the minds of fans. Thus, the licensed products not only help to memorize the event, but also carry information and may be used as a powerful tool to attract buyers.

The souvenirs not only make one feel being a part of the event, but also contribute to setting up a unique atmosphere. The perception of the event is boosted when an impact is made on the senses. The more senses are involved (visual, audial, kinetic) the greater perception is.

It should be noted that the spectators, who attend the venue, are more inclined to buy licensed products than the ones, who watch the game on TV. This rule rests on the fact that those who attend the stadiums are more involved in the sports festivity and thus need more this feeling of affiliation. As the practice shows, most of the spectators who attend the stadiums either already have some souvenirs, showcasing the event or their club or are ready to buy some.

It works the other way round, too. Meaning that the more a person is keen on the event, or the club or the team, the more he or she wants to buy their symbols or mascots. Thus, buying the mascot or other licensed products, depicting the event, helps the spectators and fans to feel being a part of this sports event. The demand for such affiliation reaches the pinnacle on the eve of and during the event. That's why the demand for the souvenir products gets to its highest during the event and a month prior to and a month after it.

5. Conclusions

Provided that the souvenir products are used not only to memorize the event but also to benefit the organizers, it will work only if the products meet the demand of the target audience. The main success factors of licensed products include:

- top notch quality;
- following the fashion;
- market-centric approach;
- brand's associations;
- IP protection.

Nowadays, mascots are seen not just as a souvenir, but as an independent interactive character, that draws the attention of the fans, as well as of other target groups, including sponsors, who use them for various marketing campaigns. Such a positive effect didn't remain unnoticed. Starting from 1966 the official mascot is a must or every World Cup. With the time, mascots penetrated into other sports events and have become an integral part of sports events, clubs and teams.

The event's mascot plays an important role, as through the souvenirs, the fans show their affiliation with the event or the club. Besides it is regarded as a source of extra revenues and a means of positioning in the external environment.

Thus, the mascot not only symbolizes the event and becomes a part of its intangible legacy, bringing together memory, history, culture and a whole spectrum of positive emotions, but also is a source of extra revenues for the event's organizers.

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