The image impact of the 2012 Olympic Games: a preliminary examination of the total pre-Games data

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In 2012 the city of London will host the XXX Olympic Summer Games. For both developed and developing countries alike, the competition to host the Olympic Games, and other mega-events, is becoming increasingly fierce (Shoval, 2002). Aside from a host of other perceived benefits, mega-events are considered to be ‘valuable promotional opportunities for [places] to showcase their attractions to global audiences’ (Home, 2007, p. 83). In a domestic context also, mega-events are considered key in the development of a positive place image; that is, ‘places […] aim to modify their image and obtain some positive associations from hosting mega events’ (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012). Additionally, successful and well run events can serve to legitimise project and government leaders to domestic audiences (Tomlinson, 2010). For although London is already considered to be a leading global city (e.g. Knight Frank Global Cities Index, 2011), a key objective for those involved in the development and delivery of the 2012 Olympic Games will be to manage the image of London (and the wider UK), to aim to improve this image nationally and internationally, and to address any potential negative image formation (DCMS, 2008).

This study is between-subjects and longitudinal in design. It utilises a mixed-methods questionnaire as the data collection instrument - supporting a critical-realist perspective. It will involve repeated applications of the same questionnaire before and after the London 2012 Olympic Games. Presented here is a preliminary analysis of the total pre-Games data.