Sustaining an icon of Dutch sport and the legacy of Amsterdam City

The Amsterdam Olympic Stadium was built for the 1928 Olympic Games of Amsterdam. After the Games, the Stadium took on a multi-functional character, hosting various sport events, national and international football matches and cultural events.

However, after its gradual decay in the 1980s the stadium was placed on the list for demolition, with the space to be used for housing purposes. Following strong opposition, the Stadium became a national monument and underwent a large renovation in 2000 with the objective of becoming self-sustainable through the hosting of events. In addition, the stadium is used extensively by athletes of the local athletics club but also by several elite World and European champions.

The potential demolition highlighted that the Dutch population was largely unaware of the facility's history and how hosting the Olympics in 1928 helped place Amsterdam on the map globally. Therefore, a strong focus was placed on educating the youth not only in Amsterdam, but across the Netherlands about the heritage of the Games, the iconic stadium and Amsterdam's relationship with the Olympic movement.

Some of these initiatives include:

**Olympic Stadium tours.** Since the renovation, Olympic legacy tours are offered to visitors. In addition to visiting the stadium's key features, these tours tell a historic story around the 1928 Amsterdam Games. It tells the stories of outstanding champions, how Coca-Cola was introduced to Europe, the introduction of the Olympic Flame and how it was the 1928 Games in Amsterdam where women were first allowed to participate.

**Renewed Wall of Fame.** After the 1928 Games, a wall of fame was created in honour of the Dutch Olympic Champions. The wall was recreated entirely to replace the old plaques and create space for the new champions being crowned every two years.

**Road to Rio school programme.** To highlight the City's Olympic heritage a special programme is organised in the lead up to the 2016 European Athletic Championships and the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Special guided tours are organised for students from local schools and the programme offers schools the possibility to host their annual sports days in the Stadium.
Dutch ‘Olympic heroes’ television series. The Olympic Stadium Amsterdam has formed an intensive collaboration with Dutch public TV broadcasters (VPRO/ NRT/NOS) to host the production of a sports documentary program: ‘Andere tijden Sport’ (Sport in different times).

To ensure the financial sustainability of the facility a section of the building has been privatised and turned into commercial rental spaces which helps to bring in revenue. The majority of these spaces are used as corporate offices. In addition, the Stadium also hosts several public facilities such as a fitness centre, a restaurant and pressroom. All facilities have the amazing selling point of having a permanent view on the athletics track and field.

**OBJECTIVES**

**Promote social and constructive behaviour**

The Stadium’s activities aim to raise awareness among citizens, and especially youth about the Olympic movement, its values and Amsterdam’s role and relationship with Olympism. Throughout the various initiatives special attention is given to the historical and social importance of the 1928 Games. Highlighting in particular, the Amsterdam Games being the first time female athletes were allowed to compete as well as marking the first appearance of the Olympic flame.

**Promote the City by leveraging its affiliation with the Olympic Movement**

Amsterdam’s Olympic legacy has created strong interest in the stadium from foreign visitors. As a result, the aim is for Olympic Stadium to take a prominent place in promotion of the City. Plans are being developed to make the tour available in different languages and offer special tours for targeted groups highlighting Olympic stories that resonate with them. Hereto, the Stadium is working closely together with Tourism Amsterdam to create a stronger integration for the Stadium in the overall tourism offering.

The spectacular and iconic sign “I amsterdam” that stands in front of the Olympic Stadium allows inhabitants and tourists to taking unique pictures that link Olympic and City symbols together.

The renovation of the Stadium into a multi-purpose facility has also positively impacted the further development of the neighbourhood. A new large underground parking was built where visitors can leave their car instead of driving into the city centre. The area has also seen large investments in additional sport facilities and housing projects. A big highlight is the ‘Stadium’ square to be finished in 2016, which will be a lively addition to the area with new shopping, dining and culture facilities.
PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Internal & External Stakeholders

- The Olympic Stadium Foundation
- City of Amsterdam, Sport Department
- Economic Board of Amsterdam
- Local schools
- Event organisers
- Tourism Amsterdam

Finance and Cost

The renovation of the Stadium was financed by several private partners and through crowdfunding (adopt a brick/seat). In the past, a number of the Stadium’s initiatives have also benefited from Olympic Solidarity funding.

The estimated cost of the renewed Wall of Fame is US$ 50,000 which included the renewal of the Wall of Fame plaques, brochures and the unveiling the new plaques for new members of the wall. Every additional plaque for new Olympic Champions costs around US$ 4,500. The project was financially supported by the Dutch Olympians Association, the Province of Noord-Holland and House of Sports.

The estimated cost of the School project is about US$ 19,000 for development, production and running the project in the first year. This project was financed with funding from the City of Amsterdam.

Use of the Olympic Brand

The Olympic brand is strongly present in the Stadium and across its activities. The stadium has a replication of the Olympic flame and the Olympic Logo, which is squarely placed at the entrance of the stadium. Furthermore, the facility is named the ‘Olympic Stadium’ and has its own bus and metro stop “Olympic Stadium”. The term is also used on directional signage within the city leading from the highway to the facility. Olympic imagery (films and photographs) appears throughout the television series and at new wall of fame inductions and Olympians participate in many activities.

Human Resources and Time

The team at the Amsterdam Olympic Stadium is comprised of seven full time staff on a year-round basis. In addition, six volunteers have been trained and help to conduct the stadium tours as needed.

EVALUATION

The Stadium’s activities are evaluated through customer feedback received in person or online. Quarterly meetings with the volunteer tour guides provide additional information on how the visitors responded to the Stadium tour.

The school programme will be evaluated through an online survey which is to be sent to all participating high schools. Budget has been allocated to temporarily add a member to the team to conduct the evaluation.
**KEY CHALLENGES**

**Becoming financially self-sustainable**

Ensuring the stadium becomes financially self-sustainable was the major concern prior to the renovation. A strategy was put in place geared at hosting athletics events for which there was a need in this market. The strategy has seen the stadium host profitable events including the annual national trials and the Amsterdam marathon. A strong calendar of non-sporting events further contributes to revenues. A critical move was to commercialise parts of the stadium and lease it to private investors who have created corporate offices, this contributes greatly to the facility's annual revenue.

**Managing costs and accessibility for the public**

To ensure the message of the Olympic values and Amsterdam's Olympic history is spread to as many citizens and visitors as possible, costs incurred by visitors to the stadium needed to be kept at a reasonable level. By keeping the costs low for visitors the income generated from the tours is not high. As a result, staff was required to divide its time between projects and opportunities that help ensure the sustainability of the stadium and the tours. To better manage time and cost constraints, the team trained six volunteers who are able to fill in when needed and conduct tours of the stadium when staff members are unavailable.

**KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Planning is crucial**

It was clear to the organisation that a solid plan needed to be put in place to meet the objective for the stadium to become financially self-sustainable. The team developed a strategy to cater to the need of hosting athletics events. This combined with additional profitable events and continuous revenues from office space rental has ensured the main objective is met.

**Train volunteers for need-based support**

To deal with fluctuating demands for the Stadium tours, the organisation decided to train a number of volunteers who can assist the team in times of high demand. This approach ensures the continuity of the stadium's educational function without creating the need of increasing ticket prices.

**CONTACT**

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