LAUSANNE OLYMPIC CENTENARY

Olympic City: Lausanne
Country: Switzerland
Edition of the Games:
Home of the IOC since 1915
2020 Youth Olympic Winter Games

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

2015 Locals & Visitors www.lausanne.ch

WHEN FOR WHO WEB

The Lausanne Olympic Centenary was a yearlong programme of celebrations marking the 100-year anniversary of the founding of the IOC Headquarters in the City of Lausanne.

In 1915, Pierre de Coubertin decided to make Lausanne the home of the International Olympic Committee. Since then, a host of other International Sporting Federations and other sports organisations have followed in the footsteps of the IOC by setting up in the City. As a result, Lausanne has been officially granted the title of ‘Olympic Capital’ by the IOC for its contribution to the development of international sport administration. This unique sporting heritage and fundamental connection to the history of the Olympic movement were placed at the heart of the Centenary celebrations.

The 12-month programme involved a huge array of sporting events, public exhibitions and cultural activities culminating in a spectacular 2-day outdoor event in the heart of the City.

This hugely ambitious project involved the input and investment of a wide array of stakeholders from across the City and from across international sport. Internally, this spanned city, state and national authorities across sport, communications, tourism and other departments. Externally, a huge level of investment and input was obtained from the International Olympic Committee in particular, as well as heavy involvement from local businesses, media, educational institutions and many, many more.

The planning and marketing of the celebrations emphasized the involvement of the local public. Every activity and initiative was specifically organised so as to engage the public as much as possible, ensuring that everyone felt part of the festivities. A host of mass participation events were organised across sporting and non-sporting areas but always connected to the Olympic theme. The result of this was the successful generation of a huge amount of local pride combined with the cementing of Lausanne's reputation as the Home of International Sport.

The public was at the heart of the whole project. Indeed, through these types of events and celebrations, Lausanne communicates and shares with its own citizens the positive impact of being the Olympic Capital and the host of many International Sports Organisations. The City aims at consolidating the anchorage with the Olympic movement not only for strengthening the international identity of Lausanne but first and foremost for the benefit of its local population and more widely for
the population of the Canton de Vaud and Switzerland. At this occasion, a study was commissioned to assess the economic impact on the city, the region and the country. The AISTS study shows that the presence of International Sports Organisations has a positive economic effect on employment, business tourism and construction (see reference below).

**OBJECTIVES**

**Celebrate Olympism and its Values**

Pierre de Coubertin was not only the founder of the IOC and the modern Olympic Games, he was also responsible for the propagation of Olympism during the modern era. The Lausanne Olympic Centenary aimed to emphasize the century-long connection between this concept of Olympism, de Coubertin and the City. It did so by organizing numerous activities educating the public on how Olympic values had positively shaped the lifestyle of the City and its citizens and by drawing attention to the significant value that Baron de Coubertin placed on Lausanne as the perfect place to fulfil his vision.

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

Lausanne is not only the home of the International Olympic Committee, it is also home to many more International Sporting Federations and Sporting Organisations connected to the Olympic movement. This has earned Lausanne the official title of “Olympic Capital” and has become part of the social fabric of the City and its residents. The Centenary celebrations aimed to showcase the rest of the world the City’s connection to the Olympic movement and its unique role in the world of international sports as well as to solidify this within the hearts and minds of local citizens.

**PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

**Internal & External Stakeholders**

- The Department of Sport, City of Lausanne
- The Department of Communications, City of Lausanne
- The Department of Protocol, City of Lausanne
- The International Olympic Committee
- International Sporting Federations
- The Olympic Museum
- The Canton of Vaud
- The Swiss Federal Government
- Local Business
- Local schools and universities, Local media
Finance and Cost

The total cost of the Olympic Centenary Celebrations amounted to CHF 734,000 (around € 645,000).

This figure represents all the marginal costs related to the marketing and operations of all activities organised throughout the 12-month programme. It includes 150,000 CHF for the race (running and walking – 1300 participants), CHF 50,000 for various events during the Centenary weekend and CHF 118,000 related to the rebranding of the metro station and CHF 100,000 for communications. Around CHF 200,000 used for the exhibitions and taken in charge by the IOC. Other expenses were covered by the City of Lausanne with the participation of the Canton de Vaud.

Use of the Olympic Brand

The City of Lausanne was officially recognised by the IOC as the “Olympic Capital” in 1993. This commendation also allows the City to use the Olympic rings as part of the Olympic Capital brand. This was incorporated into all branding for the various activities that took place.

Human Resources and Time

The work load generated by the organisation of the events has been covered by the regular staff of the City of Lausanne.

EVALUATION

For large mass participation sporting events, the number of registered participants were the primary measure of success. For the various cultural and educational activities, softer factors such as media coverage and awareness were considered.

KEY CHALLENGES

Retention of public attention

Capturing the public’s attention over a 12-month period was not an easy task. There is a high risk of people becoming bored with hearing about the various events or simply beginning to tune out. Furthermore, the event combined both sporting and non-sporting events, covering a variety of different forms of entertainment and involving a huge number of stakeholders. This posed a risk of creating confusion or uncertainty as to the core elements of the celebrations in the minds of the public.

To combat this, the organisers spent a lot of effort on the communications aspect of the various celebrations. Clear and consistent messaging was delivered at key times, aimed at various target audiences depending on the content in question.
Planning and measuring

The fact that the overall event was a one-off portfolio of smaller, individual events presented challenges in planning for demand and measuring impact. Some activities involved registered participants which made the advance planning and retrospective measurement of these relatively easy. Others, such as public exhibitions and open days had no registration nor any similar precedent and so were not as simple. Furthermore, most activities involved different combinations of stakeholders resulting in different approaches taken when planning for and measuring success.

In light of this, this was seen as a very positive problem as well as an unavoidable one. In almost every case, the level of attendance and engagement from the public was higher than anticipated and ultimately did not cause too many problems regardless. Similarly, the fact that the event was a one-off increased its attraction and this was critical to success even if it made planning it more difficult.

KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leverage your City’s assets

Planning for the Olympic Centenary began long before the event kicked off. A large amount of time was spent exploring the unique assets that the City of Lausanne had to offer and then planning how these could be best incorporated into the individual events. This included assets such as the exclusive ownership of the title of the Olympic Capital, the presence of so many International Sporting Federations and even the physical geography of the City itself being a lakeside, alpine City. Conversely, potential liabilities such as adverse and unpredictable weather were considered when organising the timing and location of activities to ensure that the chances of success were as high as possible.

Coordinate marketing and communications

With so many different activities spanning so many different members of the community, it is vital that there is a consistent and clear messaging at the top level. There needs to be a simple but effective marketing and communications strategy that is relevant to all events under the larger theme but that also connects with the different target audiences for the various individual events in question. Having a universal strategy that is supported by a centralised team that can be drawn upon by all activities and events also generates efficiencies and frees up resources that can be used elsewhere.
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