Social and Cultural Impact of the London 2012 Olympic Games: a lecturers' and students' perspective

Dr. Maria Konstantaki

School of Sport, Leisure & Travel

Introduction

- Olympic Games (OG)
  - World's most prestigious sporting occasion
  - Significant catalyst for urban regeneration (Jones, 2001)
  - Large scale cultural event with dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance
  - First class opportunity to create a forum for understanding, respecting different values / traditions and celebrating cultural diversity (Roche, 2000)
  - Raise the profile of the host nation and contribute to the 'feel-good' factor of the host city's population

enterprise&
innovation

Literature Review

- Sustainability of *social* and *cultural* impact of OG reported (Shipway, 2007), but most research has been limited to researching the economic impact of OG
  - Economic growth, business activities and tourism-related revenue (Gratton & Dobson, 1999)
  - Expenditure and economic profits associated with the Games (Matheson & Baade, 2004)
- Frey, Iraldo & Melis (2007) noted that the contribution of the OG to long term urban and regional development strategies clearly deserves more attention

enterprise&
innovation

Social Impact of Olympic Games

- *Effect / consequence of an event on human life, behaviour and interactions between individuals* (European Communities, 2007)

- Long-term social consequences on the host city /region include:
    - Strengthening local values and traditions (Hall, 1992)
    - Generating patriotism and cultivating a sense of community belonging (Waitt, 2003)
    - Feelings of excitement and national pride (Jarvis, 1995)
    - 'Physic income' (Emery, 2002)

enterprise&
innovation

Cultural Impact of Olympic Games

- *Effect or consequence of an event on the acquisition or possession of knowledge that enriches the mind* (European Communities, 2007)

- Cultural events during an OG contribute to the image of the host city while promoting accessibility and inclusion for diverse cultural groups (Humphreys & Plummer, 1993)

- Unique opportunity to promote Olympic values such as *respect*, *tolerance*, *participation*, *fair-play* and *solidarity* (Frey et al., 2007)

enterprise&
innovation

Purpose of study

- Public views must be considered in the planning of any social or cultural activities that are aimed to directly benefit the local community

- The purpose of this study was to assess the views of sport and tourism lecturers and students on the social and cultural impact of hosting the 2012 Olympic Games in London

Methodology

- Descriptive research approach (survey)
- Purposive sample of 100 respondents
  - students, n=70; age range: 18-24 yrs
  - lecturers, n=30; age range: 25-55 yrs
- Questionnaire included an equal number of close- and open-ended questions
  - Designed to allow respondents to produce standard responses and elaborate on their views

enterprise&
innovation

Methodology

- SNAP version 6.0
  - Close-ended questions
  - To identify the percentage of positive, negative, and non-responses
- Thematic analysis
  - Open-ended questions
  - To identify data units (statements and sentences) and cluster them into common themes (Biddle et al. 2001)
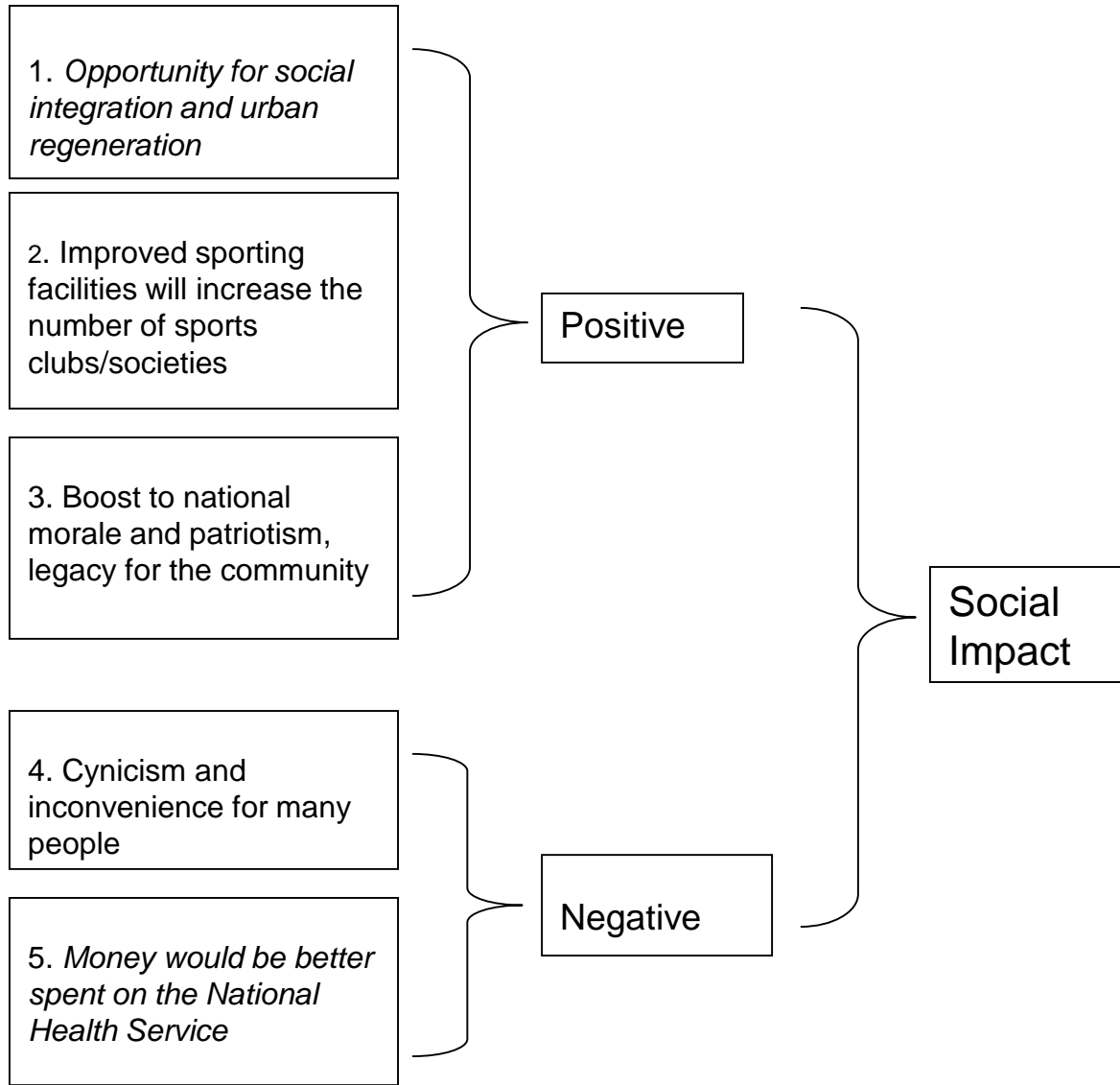
enterprise&
innovation

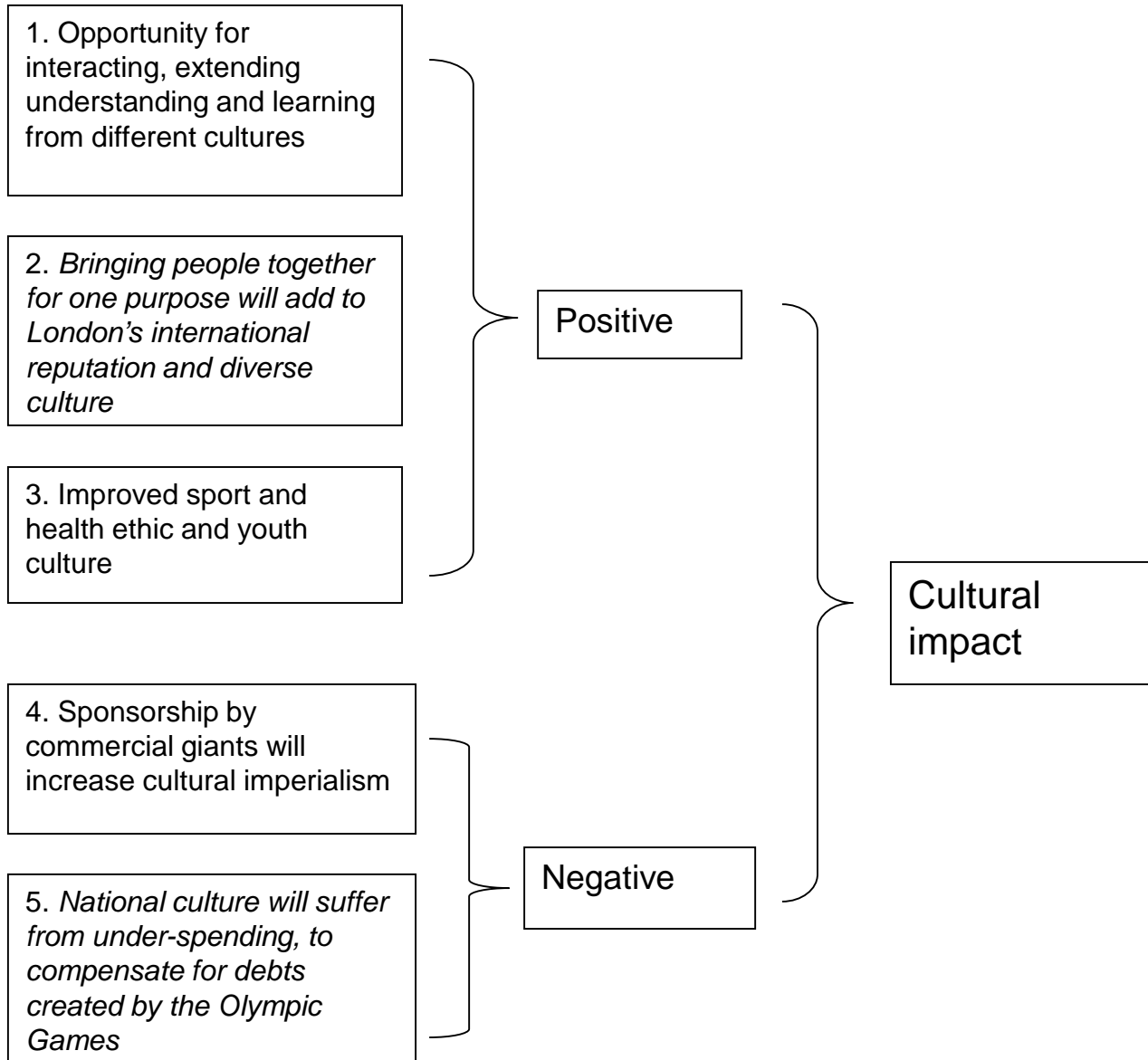# Results: Social Impact of the 2012 OG

enterprise&
innovation
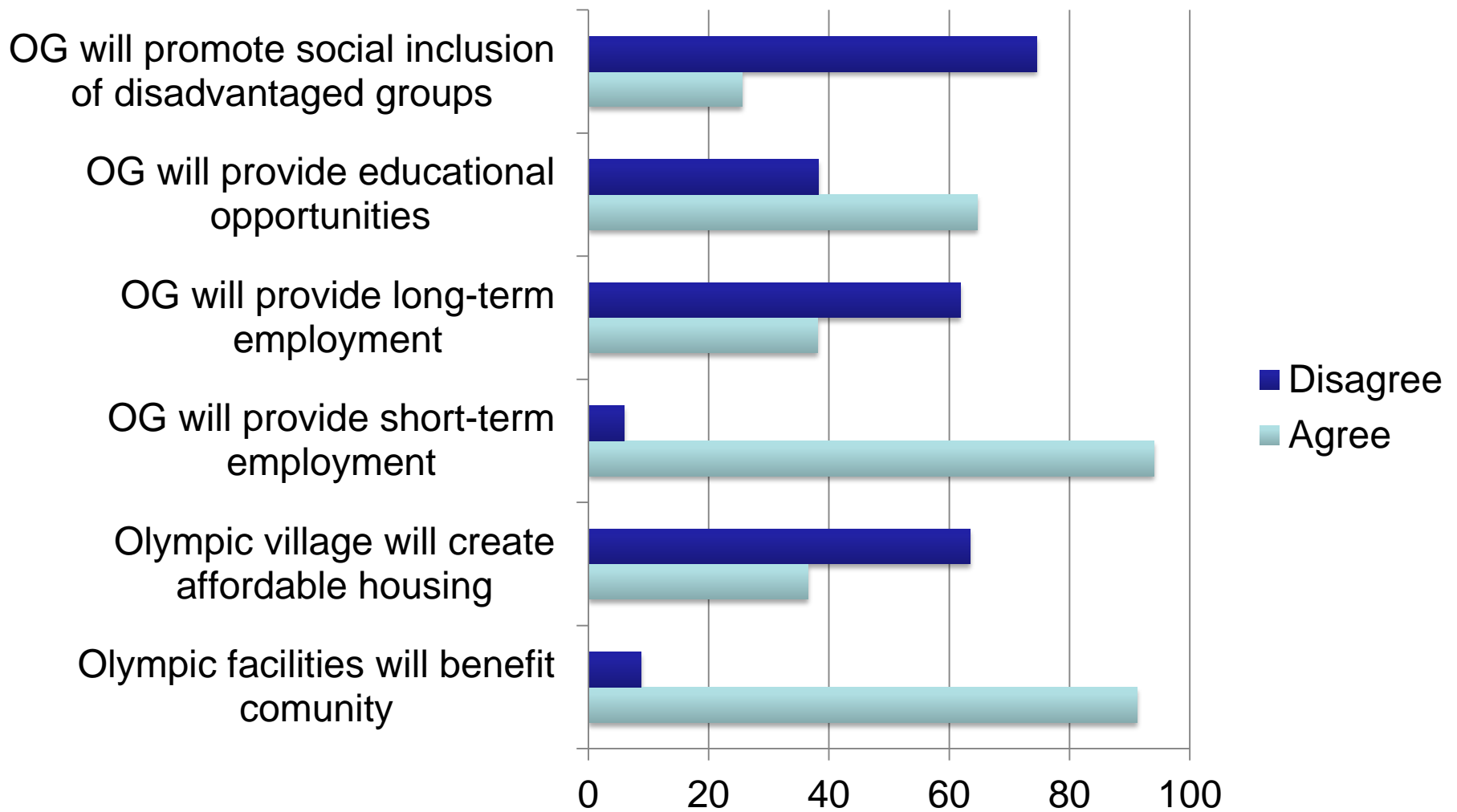
Results: Cultural Impact of the 2012 OG

enterprise&
innovation
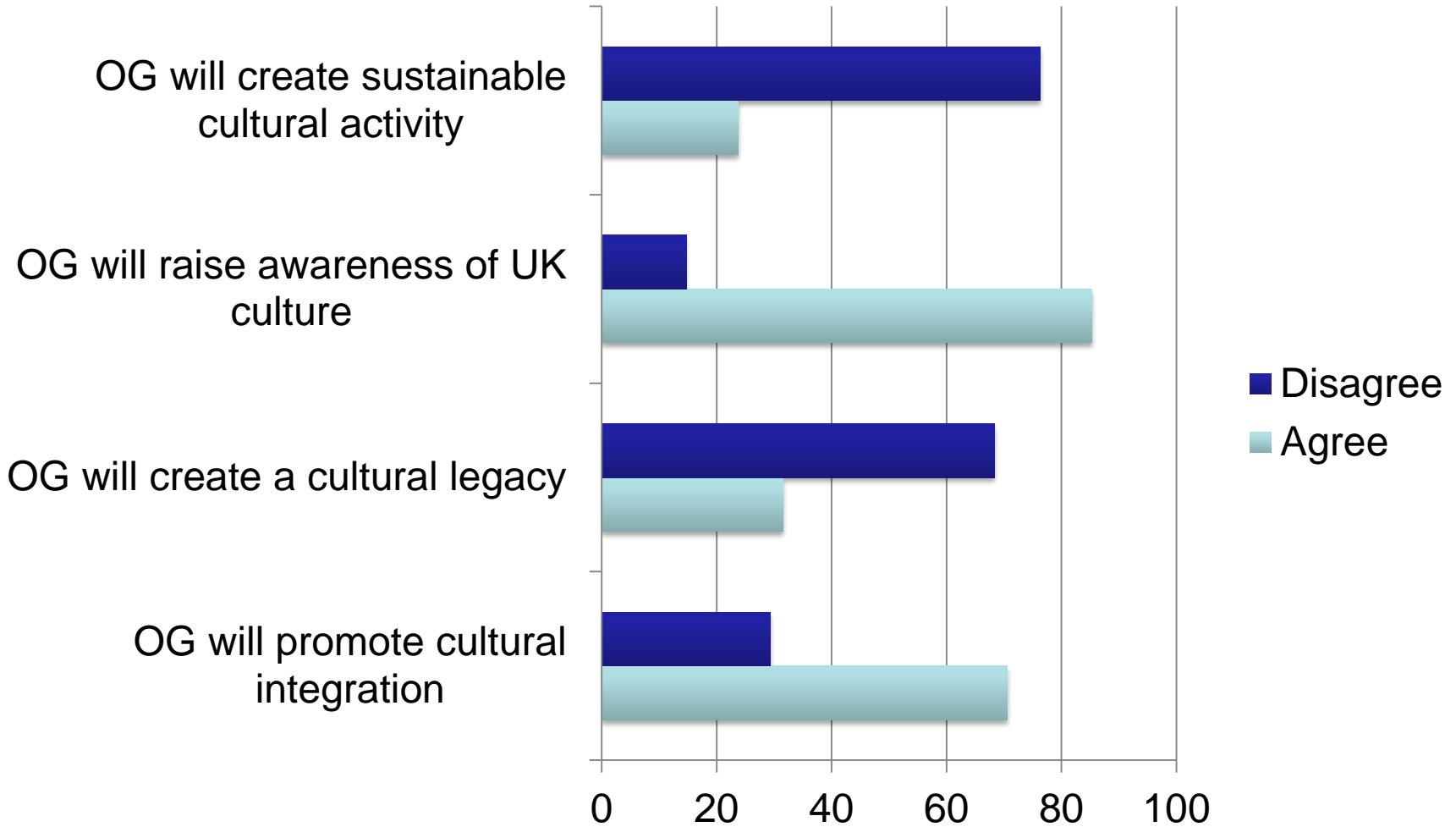
Diagram 1. Thematic analysis of respondents' views of the social impact of hosting the London 2012 Olympics. Frequency of responses;1=19, 2=15, 3=10, 4=3, 5=4.

1. *Opportunity for social integration and urban regeneration*	
2. Improved sporting facilities will increase the number of sports clubs/societies	Positive
3. Boost to national morale and patriotism, legacy for the community	

Social Impact

4. Cynicism and inconvenience for many people	
5. *Money would be better spent on the National Health Service*	Negative

enterprise&
innovation

Diagram 2. Respondents' views of the cultural impact of hosting the London 2012 Olympics. Frequency percentage (%) of responses; 1=18, 2=12, 3=11, 4=2, 5=2.

1. Opportunity for interacting, extending understanding and learning from different cultures

2. *Bringing people together for one purpose will add to London's international reputation and diverse culture*

3. Improved sport and health ethic and youth culture

Positive

Cultural impact

4. Sponsorship by commercial giants will increase cultural imperialism

5. *National culture will suffer from under-spending, to compensate for debts created by the Olympic Games*

Negative

enterprise&
innovation

Discussion: Respondents' positive perceptions

- Excitement and enthusiasm about the wide range of employment and training opportunities that will be created in the run up to the 2012 Olympic Games

- Sense of national pride that London will be the host city

- OG will bring about social and cultural benefits that will create a legacy for the community

enterprise&
innovation

Discussion: Respondents' concerns

- Concerns about sustainability of benefits
- Scepticism about cost of unnecessary vanity projects and their implications for tax increases
- Concerns about short-term employment opportunities
- Olympic Village will not create affordable housing for the local community
- Cultural activities will not be sustainable after the Games
- Lack of awareness about existing strategies devised by the government and stakeholders aiming to address such shortcomings

enterprise&
innovation

Conclusions

- The government and LOGOC need to raise public awareness in relation to planned social and cultural developments / opportunities in the run up to 2012 emphasising sustainability strategies

- Preferred communication routes such as television, radio and the internet to broadcast 2012 related education, skills and training initiatives with higher frequency

- Such approaches will eradicate concerns, fears and misconceptions, instil further positivism and enthusiasm in the British public and enhance community spirit

enterprise&
innovation

References

- Biddle, S. Markland, D. Gilbourne, D. Chatzisarantis, N. & Sparkes, A. (2001). Research Methods in Sport and Exercise Psychology: quantitative and qualitative issues. Journal of Sports Sciences, 19, 777-809

- Frey, M., Iraldo, F., & Melis, M. (2007). The impact of wide-scale sport events on local development: an assessment of the XXth Torino Olympics through the sustainability report. Retrieved April 22nd, 2008 from http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/events/lisbon07/papers/Frey.pdf

- Gratton, C. & Dobson, N. (1999). The economic benefits of hosting major sports events. Insights: Tourism Intelligence Papers. English Tourism Council: A31-A36.

- Matheson, V.A. & Baade R.A. (2004). Mega-sporting events in developing nations: playing the way to prosperity? Retrieved March 15th, 2008 from http://www.holycross.edu/departments/economics

- Roche, M. (2000). Mega-events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture. London: Routledge.

- Shipway, R. (2007). Sustainable legacies for the 2012 Olympic Games. The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, 127(3), 119-124.

- Waitt, G. (2003). The social impacts of the Sydney Olympics. Annals of Tourism Research, 30(1), 194-215.

enterprise&
innovation