

Image of 2023 fisu world student games in digital student sociocultural space

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Abstract

Objective of the study was to survey and analyze attitudes to the upcoming 2023 World Student Games image in the host mid-Urals university student communities using a social networking activity analysis and questionnaire survey on a specialty-specific basis.

Methods and structure of the study. We run for the purposes of the study a digital questionnaire survey (on CAVI platform, with the survey data mathematically processed by D.V. Shkurin using Vortex software tools) of a representative student sample (n=333); and a social networking activity analysis of the VKontakte accounts (n=368) of the students from 18 universities in the Sverdlovsk Oblast [3, p. 66], in December 2020 through January 2021. The survey and social networking activity analysis were designed to profile attitudes to the 2023 FISU World Student Games, its perceived role for the federal and regional progress, and the physical education and sports devotions in the sample.

Results and Conclusion. The study found a significant proportion of the sample demonstrating positive attitudes to the 2023 World Student Games – apparently as a result of the event promotion/ imaging initiatives. Further advocacy is recommended along these lines, including empowerment of the activists and special encouragements for the still passive/ uncertain student groups. Target efforts to shape up a positive image of the event using modern social and communication technologies will help improve the 2023 World Student Games organizing, management and hosting services, with special benefits for the student social networking activity. Of special interest in this context may be the PR campaigns, communication technologies and promotions (including the social networking ones) geared to engage the still passive/ hesitant students, with the potential communication toolkits including the linguistic means to encourage healthy considerations/ reflections, motivations and rationale for contributions to the mega-event – and facilitate the transition from the “Me and event” to “My event” mindsets. Such campaigning and promotions should be reasonably customized to the socio-cultural environments and specialties in the host student communities.

Keywords: 2023 World Student Games, image, digital sociocultural space, student communities.

Background. The 2023 FISU World Student Games hosted by the Sverdlovsk Oblast and Urals Federal County is commonly considered a great catalyst for the physical education and sport sector progress in at least the host area [2, 4]. The event hosting expectations and experiences are known to trigger a shift in the young people’s perceptions of the event from the purely sporting to multisided socio-cultural ones. For the host university community, the event offers “important contributions to the international image and authority of the university” [1, p. 9]. The 2023

World Student Games format is particularly appreciated in this context since it was complemented by a large-scale cultural program geared to boost the social activity in connection with the mega-event.

Objective of the study was to survey and analyze attitudes to the upcoming 2023 World Student Games image in the host mid-Urals university student communities using a social networking activity analysis and questionnaire survey on a specialty-specific basis.

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vey (on CAVI platform, with the survey data mathematically processed by D.V. Shkurin using Vortex software tools) of a representative student sample (n=333); and a social networking activity analysis of the VKontakte accounts (n=368) of the students from 18 universities in the Sverdlovsk Oblast [3, p. 66], in December 2020 through January 2021. The survey and social networking activity analysis were designed to profile attitudes to the 2023 FISU World Student Games, its perceived role for the federal and regional progress, and the physical education and sports devotions in the sample.

Results and discussion. Our analysis of the offline/online survey data and their correlations including behavioral models of the traditional/digital student communities made it possible to profile many social networking activity aspects within the scope of the study [3, pp. 65-66]. Virtual communication implies the personal social identity being constructed so as to mimic

to a degree the offline 'real' socializing patterns and succeed in the online community as allowed by a variety of personality factors and social provisions.

An online community, with its socializing needs formed on rather significant than formal basis, tends to demonstrate the choices dictated by the reference group and individual intelligence, vocabulary, etc. An objective socio-cultural environment will be interpreted in the case as dictated by the commonly accepted ideas spontaneously formed in the digital communication flow. Public (primary) channels basically play an informative and image shaping roles; whilst the secondary (personal) channels tend to shape up and interpret contents as required by the group mindsets, preferences and interests. Image/ perceptions of any social phenomenon, including a mega-event will be constructed by the group on a multisided basis.

In the context of the transition from rational to emotional aspects, and from the pure information to the

Table 1. Attitudes to the upcoming 2023 World Student Games in the specialty groups: 2020 questionnaire survey data, group %

Group	Interest reported	Specialty				Sample
		Humanities	Natural sciences, mathematics	Engineering/technology	Socio-, economic	
a	Highly interested	3	9	12	8	8
b	Rather interested than not	25	14	21	31	23
	Indifferent	22	15	17	18	18
	Uncertain	8	23	9	9	12
c	Rather disinterested than not	14	14	8	12	11
d	No interest	29	25	33	23	28
	Interest ratio (K)*	-0,411	-0,308	-0,285	-0,116	-0,277

Note: $*K = (2a + b - c - 2d) / 100$

Table 2. Social networking activity content analysis: attitudes to the major sports events like 2023 World Student Games and physical education and sports, group %

Attitude	Specialty				Sample
	Humanities	Socio-, economic	Natural sciences, mathematics	Engineering/technology	
Interest in the major international and Russian sports events	37	36	44	20	34
Interest in student sports	14	26	21	24	21
Interest in the top-ranking events like World Student Games	15	8	11	17	12
Physical education and sports devotee	22	33	28	20	26
Physical education and sports interest limited by only supporter activity	30	27	11	17	25
Professional athlete	14	16	33	20	17
Average	1,31	1,47	1,28	1,17	1,36



predispositions-driven interpretations, image may be defined as the socio-communicative technology of special influence on the public opinion shaping process. However, this opinion shaping flow is rather spontaneous in fact, with an image established in the social opinions as a result of a mix of ideas, conceptions, impressions etc. – largely driven by emotions with associations, symbols, etc.

Therefore, a spontaneously formed image may also be viewed as the emotional construct not necessarily compliant with the objective reality due to the specific limitations of the modern online communication toolkit. This process is known to develop a default spiral that means that some group members are disproportionately authoritative knowing that their opinions are supported by the group majority, whilst their opponents tend to keep silent. Such distorted communication process is known to spiral and effectively inflate some topics or opinions and marginalize the others in the group communication system, thereby forming images of every social phenomenon. These logics hold true for the attitudes to the 2023 World Student Games.

The questionnaire survey found a gap between the objective and subjective images of the 2023 WSG in the mid-Urals student sample. Thus an interest-rating survey found the following three relatively independent groups (Table 1): interested (positively active); indifferent; and disinterested (negatively active) in the mega-event.

Note that a negative interest ratio is indicative of the dominant passive/ negative attitudes to the upcoming event – that may be explained to a degree, as we believe, by the perceived "no personal gain" and "little relevance" beliefs – partially due to its time falling beyond the academic timeframe. It should be mentioned that the specialty groups were somewhat different in their attitudes, with the socio-economic (a + b = 39%) and engineering (33%) groups showing much more interest than their peers from the humanities (28%) and natural science (23%) groups.

The social networking activity content analysis found a higher interest in the major sports events like 2023 World Student Games and physical education and sports related information (see Table 2) than the questionnaire survey; with 34% of the analyzed accounts, however, found irrelevant.

The specialty group social networking activity data were found to correlate with the questionnaire survey data, with the 'interested' subgroup also making around 33% of the sample. As far as benefits of the

event for the region are concerned, the sample prioritized the federal and regional physical education and sports infrastructure development benefits (29% of the sample, with the intergroup differences tested meaningless); plus benefits for the national image and role in the global sports movement (27% of the sample, with 15% and 35% support in the natural science and socio-economic groups, respectively); and impetus for the national professional and amateur sports (25% of the sample).

Furthermore, 20% of the sample reported the need for the physical education and sport sector to be supported everyday rather than rushed prior to major international sports events (with the lowest share of 14% in the humanities group); and one of seven respondents doubted that the event hosting costs are paid back (with the highest share of 18% in the engineering group). The groups showed the lowest support of the idea that the Russian team success will boost the people's patriotism: only 7% of the sample (with 3% and 9% shares in the natural science and engineering groups, respectively).

The 2023 World Student Games related information was found to circulate in the social networking activity with the news reposts (above 50% of the sample), with one of four willing to join the fan community, and one of six to volunteer. One of six was found critical of the event, mostly among the indifferent or negative subgroups; with some having doubts in the payback of the investments and seeing more beneficial alternative projects for the finance (scholarships, classrooms/dormitories rehab projects, procurements of necessary laboratory equipment, etc.).

Conclusion. The study found a significant proportion of the sample demonstrating positive attitudes to the 2023 World Student Games – apparently as a result of the event promotion/ imaging initiatives. Further advocacy is recommended along these lines, including empowerment of the activists and special encouragements for the still passive/ uncertain student groups. Target efforts to shape up a positive image of the event using modern social and communication technologies will help improve the 2023 World Student Games organizing, management and hosting services, with special benefits for the student social networking activity. Of special interest in this context may be the PR campaigns, communication technologies and promotions (including the social networking ones) geared to engage the still passive/ hesitant students, with the potential communication toolkits including the linguistic means to encourage healthy considera-



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