The Impact of the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games on Tourism Development and Policy Responses

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Abstract. This paper takes the 2032 Brisbane Summer Olympics as the research object. Through a systematic comparison of the tourism effects of previous Olympic Games from 1984 to 2024, it assesses the expected impact of the Games on Brisbane's tourism industry and proposes a corresponding policy framework. For Brisbane, the expected impact manifests across four dimensions: at the economic effects level, considerable benefits are anticipated but face the hard constraint of accommodation supply (currently only 24% of 2032 demand has been achieved); at the urban renewal level, A$19 billion in infrastructure investment will enhance carrying capacity, but post-Games utilization efficiency determines long-term outcomes, requiring Brisbane to draw on both the positive experience of Sydney's careful planning and the negative lesson of Athens' heavy construction, light operation; at the global exposure level, the visibility leap represents the greatest opportunity, but vigilance is needed against destination disillusionment caused by the gap between the extraordinary urban image presented during the event and visitors' actual post-Games experiences; at the social tensions level, the historical trauma of Expo 88 necessitates the establishment of institutionalized community participation mechanisms—without these, social tensions will erode the positive value of the other three dimensions. Based on the above expected impacts, this paper proposes an inclusive tourism growth policy framework, arguing that only by integrating in-event reception capacity, post-Games legacy planning, sustained brand operations, and community benefit protection into a unified full-cycle governance framework can Brisbane transform economic opportunities into reality and achieve the leap from Australia's third city to a globally renowned destination.

Keywords: Brisbane 2032, Olympic Games, tourism impact, tourism policy.

1. Introduction

In July 2021, the International Olympic Committee officially announced that Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland, had won the bid to host the 2032 Summer Olympics, making it the third Australian city to host the Summer Olympics after Melbourne (1956) and Sydney (2000). The bid and preparation for the Brisbane Olympics coincided with a period of profound transformation in the global tourism industry following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, presenting both unprecedented opportunities and challenges for its tourism development.

The impact of mega-sporting events on the tourism industry of host cities has long been a core issue in tourism research. Existing studies have revealed that mega-events such as the Olympics can enhance the international visibility of destinations through the demonstration effect, improve tourism reception conditions through infrastructure investment, and directly drive tourism consumption through visitor inflows. However, the realization of the Olympics' tourism effects does not occur automatically; it is constrained by multiple factors such as the host city's policy response capacity, legacy planning level, and social acceptance. After the 2004 Athens Olympics, tourism officials adopted temporary policies to address post-Olympic tourism development, failing to fully develop sports tourism potential. This lesson warns us that Olympic tourism effects lacking forward-looking policy design may be short-lived and unsustainable.

Rebecca Frizelle, a member of the Brisbane Organizing Committee, candidly stated: "Sydney is a well-known global city, Brisbane less so. " This means Brisbane needs more proactive tourism policies to realize the Olympic dividend. This paper aims to answer two core questions: First, what impact will the Brisbane Olympics have on the local tourism industry? Second, what policies should

Brisbane formulate to maximize tourism benefits and avoid potential risks? This paper adopts an empirical analysis paradigm, comprehensively employing economic impact assessment, case comparison, and policy analysis methods to provide theoretical support for the formulation of Brisbane's Olympic tourism policies.

2. Economic Analysis of the Olympics' Impact on Tourism

Understanding the impact of mega-events like the Olympics on tourism requires going beyond the simple tourist volume growth perspective to establish a comprehensive analytical framework that covers multiple dimensions and balances short-term and long-term effects. Unlike other events, the Olympics possess the special attribute of being an urban transformation catalyst, making their impact on the host city's tourism industry more complex.

First, the Economic Effects Dimension. The Olympics affect the host city's tourism economy through direct, indirect, and induced effects. The direct effect manifests as tourist consumption during the event stimulating sectors such as accommodation, catering, and transportation. The indirect effect originates from the multiplier effect of the tourism industry chain. The induced effect is reflected in employment growth and resident income enhancement driven by tourism expansion. Research by Deloitte Access Economics shows that the tourism economic effects of mega-events often continue to manifest 5 to 10 years after the Games, with their catalytic effect typically far exceeding the short-term benefits of the event itself [1].

Second, the Urban Renewal Dimension. The Olympics serve as an important temporal anchor for urban infrastructure investment, accelerating the upgrading of transportation networks, sports venues, and hotel reception facilities. These hardware improvements directly affect the destination's tourism carrying capacity and visitor experience. The 2000 Sydney Olympics is a typical case—after the Games, Sydney's convention and business tourism experienced significant growth.

Third, the Global Exposure Dimension. As one of the world's most influential media events, the Olympics are a super platform for destination marketing. The 2024 Paris Olympics generated 412 billion social media interactions. This unprecedented global attention can significantly enhance the host city's brand awareness and attract the attention of potential tourists. However, exposure does not automatically equal visitation. Destinations need to develop effective marketing conversion strategies to transform short-term attention into long-term visitor flows.

Fourth, the Social Tensions Dimension. Tourism development for mega-events may generate social costs, including rising housing prices, community spatial displacement, and the commodification of urban imagery. The international academic community refers to this phenomenon as the Potemkin effect of mega-events—the glossy facade of the event may mask the social exclusion and rights impairment of local residents. The experience of Brisbane's Expo 88 shows that mega-events may become tools for accelerated gentrification, triggering community protests and distrust.

3. Empirical Comparison of Tourism Effects Across Olympic Games

3.1. Economic Effects Dimension

Economic effects are the most intuitive dimension for measuring the Olympics' tourism impact. The following table summarizes visitor reception and economic benefits during the event period for major Summer Olympics from 1984 to 2024.

Table 1. Economic Effects of Major Summer Olympics (1984–2024)

Olympics	In-Event Inbound/International Visitors	Tourism Revenue/Economic Effects	Post-Event Tourism Growth
1984 Los Angeles	Approx. 230000	Profit of US$225 million	—
1988 Seoul	Approx. 220000	Tourism-related revenue over US$1.4 billion	+16.4%, +13.5% in two years post-Games
1992 Barcelona	Approx. 300000 inbound	Tourism revenue over US$3 billion	500% growth in 10 years
1996 Atlanta	Approx. 350000	Accommodation tourism revenue approx. US$3.5 billion	Became the 2nd largest convention city in the US
2000 Sydney	Approx. 500000 international	Tourism revenue approx. A$8 billion	1.2 million more visitors than 2000 in 2001
2004 Athens	Inbound visitors declined (13 million → 11 million)	Approx. €2 billion revenue	Declined initially, then grew by 450000 annually
2024 Paris	Approx. 1.68 million international	—	Effects continuing to unfold

The following facts and insights can be drawn from Table 1.

First, in-event visitor growth is universal but varies significantly in scale. Each Olympics generally brings an increase of 200000 to 500000 inbound visitors, but the specific scale is influenced by factors such as the city's visibility and geographical conditions. The Sydney Olympics set a historical peak, receiving approximately 500000 foreign visitors within 16 days. The 2024 Paris Olympics attracted 1.68 million international visitors, far exceeding previous editions, benefiting from Europe's high-density urban network and the convenient access of short-haul visitors—an advantage Brisbane does not possess. For Brisbane, geographical isolation means inbound visitors will be predominantly long-haul overnight travelers. While this limits total visitor numbers, it implies higher per-person expenditure and longer lengths of stay [2].

Second, the post-event lag dividend is universal but varies in intensity across cities. Seoul's inbound visitors maintained double-digit growth for two years after the Games (+16.4%, +13.5%). Barcelona's visitor volume grew 500% over 10 years, with its tourism ranking rising from 16th to 3rd in Europe. Sydney received 1.2 million more visitors in 2001 than in the Olympic year, and its international conference ranking rose from 7th to 2nd. This demonstrates that the peak of the Olympics' tourism economic effects often occurs not during the event but during the 5-to-10-year catalytic period afterward. Brisbane's policy focus should be on sustained operations over the 10 years following the Games rather than on the short-term reception during the two to three weeks of the event [3].

Third, Athens serves as a cautionary counterexample. Athens' inbound visitors during the event declined rather than increased, falling from 13 million in 2003 to 11 million, primarily due to the avoidance effect triggered by security concerns—some tourists actively avoided traveling during the event due to perceived risks. Tourism remained sluggish in the early post-Games period, and it was not until before 2011 that a recovery growth of 450000 visitors per annum was achieved. Athens' lesson demonstrates that even hosting the Olympics does not guarantee tourism growth momentum if there is a lack of new attractions and post-Games planning [4].

3.2. Urban Renewal Dimension

Urban renewal serves as the bridge connecting in-event investment and post-event tourism growth. The following table compares the urban renewal models and effects of various Olympic Games.

Table 2. Urban Renewal Effects of Major Summer Olympics (1984–2024)

Olympics	Urban Renewal Model	Post-Event Facility Utilization Effect	Impact on Tourism
1988 Seoul	Hotel supply grew over 20% annually; expanded Gimpo Airport	Facilities continued serving tourism growth	Supported double-digit post-Games inbound growth
1992 Barcelona	Large-scale hotel construction; coastal area development	Olympic Village became new tourism landmark	500% visitor growth in 10 years
2000 Sydney	New sports venues; urban transport system upgrades	Venues continued hosting major events post-Games	Conference tourism ranking rose from 7th to 2nd
2004 Athens	Extensive new venue construction	Insufficient post-Games utilization, poor management	Tourism development lost momentum
2024 Paris	Emphasized existing facilities (95% existing or temporary)	Low construction cost, high legacy conversion rate	Promoted balanced development in Greater Paris

The following facts and insights can be drawn from Table 2.

First, urban renewal effects depend on post-event utilization planning. Sydney's experience demonstrates that well-planned post-Games legacy management enables infrastructure to continue serving tourism economic development. Sydney established the Olympic Park Authority after the Games to manage ongoing venue operations, with post-Games utilization as a key principle from the design stage. The Sydney International Aquatic Centre was built with complementary commercial facilities, and temporary seating was removed after the Games, successfully transforming it into a commercially operating venue. After the Games, Australia's ranking in the international conference market rose from 7th in 1999 to 2nd in 2001. However, Sydney's experience was not perfect—Olympic Park suffered serious losses after the Games and only gradually improved after introducing professional leagues and selling naming rights in 2004, indicating that even successful post-Games management requires sustained operational investment [5].

Second, Athens' lesson lies in heavy construction, light operation. The Greek government invested over €3 billion to build world-class venues for the Olympics, but post-Games utilization was slow. One year later, Greece had no stadium available for track and field training, most venues were closed, and the government still needed to pay approximately €100 million in annual maintenance costs. In 2005, Greece's economic growth fell to its lowest point in nine years.

Third, the Paris model offers a new approach. The 2024 Paris Olympics utilized 95% existing or temporary venues. As the first Olympics fully compliant with Olympic Agenda 2020, Paris placed temporary venues at city landmarks such as Place de la Concorde and the Eiffel Tower, saving costs while delivering a novel experience. Even the newly built Aquatics Centre fully considered post-Games utilization, positioned from the outset as the core of a regional mixed-use development. The Brisbane Organizing Committee's philosophy of not rebuilding, but planning an event that fits the city and region echoes the Paris model. However, Brisbane's planned new 63000-seat main stadium has already sparked protests from environmental groups and Indigenous organizations, and balancing post-Games legacy with community demands remains an important challenge.

3.3. Global Exposure Dimension

Global exposure is the core advantage distinguishing the Olympics from other tourism marketing tools, but its conversion efficiency varies by city strategy.

Table 3. Global Exposure Effects of Major Summer Olympics (1992–2024)

Olympics	Global Exposure Characteristics	Marketing Conversion Strategy	Brand Enhancement Effect
1992 Barcelona	Global television coverage	Systematic city brand marketing	Tourism ranking rose from 16th to 3rd
2000 Sydney	Global media focus	Australian Tourist Commission systematic strategy	Increased destination choice share in US, Germany, UK
2012 London	Global media coverage	Continued post-Games brand operations	Sustained inbound tourism growth
2024 Paris	412 billion social media interactions	Distributed events to suburban areas	Promoted wider regional tourism development

The following facts and insights can be drawn from Table 3.

First, being seen does not equal being chosen. The conversion of attention into actual tourism consumption requires systematic marketing conversion strategies. The success of Barcelona and Sydney lay in translating the Olympic narrative into concrete tourism products and itinerary designs. For example, before the Sydney Olympics, the Australian Tourist Commission launched a systematic overseas marketing plan, deeply linking the Olympics with Australia's unique natural and cultural experiences, and continued operations after the Games. This increased the proportion of travelers from core source markets such as the US, Germany, and the UK choosing Australia as a holiday destination. In contrast, Athens lacked effective product and marketing conversion after the Games, and the global attention accumulated during the event failed to translate into sustained tourist visits. This demonstrates that the Olympics' eyeball effect has a clear time window; without a pre-established product conversion mechanism, attention will rapidly dissipate as the event concludes [6].

Second, the halo effect carries a Potemkin trap. If the city image presented during the event diverges from visitors' actual post-Games experiences, it may lead to destination disillusionment, actually damaging long-term brand value. During mega-events, host cities often create an extraordinary urban landscape through intensive urban beautification, security upgrades, and service mobilization. However, once these temporary investments are withdrawn after the Games, the city's everyday traffic congestion, service shortcomings, and social problems re-emerge. If visitors arrive with the perfect expectations cultivated during the event, the experience gap will translate into negative word-of-mouth. For Brisbane, moderate expectation management during event marketing is necessary to avoid over-promising.

Third, Brisbane faces the challenge of relatively limited international visibility. Sydney is a well-known global city, but Brisbane is not yet. This visibility gap is both a challenge and an opportunity—the Olympics could potentially elevate Brisbane from Australia's third city to a globally renowned destination. Looking at Barcelona's experience, before the 1992 Olympics, its international visibility was far behind Madrid's, yet with sustained urban brand marketing after the Games, its tourism ranking rose from 16th to 3rd in Europe within 10 years. For Brisbane, the Olympics present a historic window for brand leap, but the magnitude of the leap depends on pre-Games visibility and the continuity of post-Games brand operations. A lower starting point means greater room for improvement, but also requires more resources for fundamental destination awareness building.

3.4. Social Tensions Dimension

Social tensions represent the easily overlooked dark side of the Olympics' tourism effects. The following table compares the social costs of various Olympic Games.

Table 4. Social Tensions Effects of Major Summer Olympics (1992–2024)

Olympics	Social Tensions Manifestation	Community Response	Long-Term Impact
1992 Barcelona	Accelerated gentrification	Partial community displacement	Unequal distribution in urban renewal
2004 Athens	Resident protests over venue construction	Community mobilization	Declining trust in the event
2016 Rio	Forced eviction of favela residents	Large-scale protests	Negative international public opinion
2024 Paris	Resident concerns over congestion and price hikes	Some residents moved out during event	Needs policy mitigation
1988 Brisbane Expo	Forced relocation of South Brisbane working-class community	Historians criticize as speculative land dealings	Continues to affect community trust in mega-events

The following facts and insights can be drawn from Table 4.

First, the Potemkin effect of mega-events is universal. The glossy event facade may conceal the social exclusion and rights impairment of local residents. On the eve of the Rio Olympics, the government forcibly relocated favela residents under the guise of urban renewal, directly provoking public criticism from international human rights organizations. Although the Barcelona Olympics are hailed as a success story, the city's coastal development and Olympic Village construction were also accompanied by the passive displacement of old communities and the marginalization of low-income groups. This disconnect between appearance and substance is not an accidental error of individual cities but a universal structural contradiction in mega-event-driven urban development—when city marketing becomes the overriding policy objective, the spatial rights of vulnerable groups are often relegated to a secondary position.

Second, the history of Brisbane's Expo 88 provides the most direct warning. Under the impetus of Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the Expo became a tool for accelerated gentrification and land development. Historian Jon Piccini characterized this phenomenon as a carnival of opportunism and concealed land dealings [7]. At the time, the state government used the Expo as an opportunity to promote large-scale urban renewal in South Brisbane. On the surface, this enhanced the city's image, but in reality, it concealed the forced relocation of working-class communities and the unequal distribution of land benefits under the guise of public interest. This history is not a distant past; it constitutes a yet-unhealed wound in Brisbane's urban development memory. The community's natural distrust of mega-event promises largely stems from this obscured Expo legacy. This historical trauma means that any Brisbane 2032 planning lacking transparency and community consultation will easily activate citizens' historical vigilance.

Third, current Brisbane protesters have publicly questioned the inclusivity of Olympic planning, with controversies escalating into high-profile political theater. Unlike the state-dominated model of the Expo era, Brisbane's social environment has undergone profound changes—civil society is more active, information is more transparent, and protesters are using social media and public forums to question whether Olympic infrastructure primarily serves the elite rather than ordinary citizens, and whether event-time housing demand will further exacerbate an already tight housing market. These controversies, widely reported by the media, have generated sustained public discourse pressure. Meanwhile, the International Olympic Committee has incorporated human rights and inclusivity into its bid evaluation framework, elevating social tension management from a voluntary option to a mandatory issue. For Brisbane, the ability to establish effective community participation mechanisms will directly impact the domestic legitimacy and international reputation of the Olympics [8].

3.5. Expected Impact of the Brisbane Olympics on Local Tourism from the Four-Dimensional Comparison

Based on the comparative analysis of previous Olympic Games across the four dimensions above, the following judgments can be made regarding the expected impact of the 2032 Brisbane Olympics on local tourism.

First, at the economic effects level, expected benefits are considerable but face the hard constraint of accommodation supply. Drawing on historical experience, Brisbane is expected to attract 300000 to 500000 international visitors during the event, with a more significant lag dividend likely to emerge 5 to 10 years after the Games. The experiences of Seoul, Barcelona, and Sydney all demonstrate that the true tourism value of the Olympics lies in long-term post-Games release. The A$70.7 billion economic opportunity estimated in the Deloitte report does not materialize out of thin air—its realization depends on supporting accommodation capacity. However, Brisbane has currently only achieved 24% of the accommodation demand target for 2032, a significant gap compared to Seoul's over 20% annual growth in hotel supply before the Olympics and Barcelona's large-scale hotel construction. Without addressing this accommodation gap, visitor demand without bed capacity will directly constrain the realization of economic effects.

Second, at the urban renewal level, infrastructure upgrades will enhance tourism carrying capacity, but post-Games utilization efficiency determines long-term outcomes. Brisbane's A$19 billion infrastructure investment will significantly improve transport accessibility and reception facility standards. However, the contrasting cases of Sydney and Athens demonstrate that infrastructure investment does not automatically translate into tourism returns. The Brisbane Organizing Committee's philosophy of not rebuilding, but planning an event that fits the city and region echoes Paris's lightweight model of 95% existing or temporary venues. However, the planned new 63000-seat main stadium has already sparked protests from environmental and Indigenous groups. How post-Games uses are defined during the construction phase—transformation into a sports tourism base, convention and exhibition center, or community sports space—will directly affect the tourism conversion efficiency of the urban renewal dimension.

Third, at the global exposure level, the visibility leap represents the greatest opportunity, but the Potemkin trap requires vigilance. Brisbane's current international visibility lags far behind Sydney's, and this visibility gap precisely constitutes the space for brand enhancement. Drawing on Barcelona's experience of rising from 16th to 3rd in European tourism rankings after the 1992 Olympics, the Games provide Brisbane with a historic window to leap from Australia's third city to a globally renowned destination. However, the disappointment expressed by visitors to Rio's public security after those Games serves as a warning—if the extraordinary urban image presented during the event diverges from visitors' actual post-Games experiences, it may lead to destination disillusionment. Brisbane needs to maintain moderate expectation management in its event marketing to avoid over-promising.

Fourth, at the social tensions level, the historical trauma of Expo 88 constitutes the most direct warning. During Brisbane's Expo 88, the working-class community of South Brisbane was forcibly relocated under the guise of urban renewal, with historians characterizing the phenomenon as a carnival of opportunism and concealed land dealings. This historical memory continues to affect community trust in mega-events. Current protesters have publicly questioned the inclusivity of Olympic planning, with controversies escalating into high-profile political theater. The International Olympic Committee has incorporated human rights and inclusivity into its bid evaluation framework, making social tension management a mandatory issue. Without effective community participation and benefit distribution mechanisms, social tensions will erode the legitimacy of urban renewal, thereby undermining the positive value of economic effects and global exposure.

4. Brisbane 2032: A Policy Framework for Inclusive Tourism Growth

Based on the above four-dimensional comparative findings, this paper proposes an inclusive tourism growth policy framework for Brisbane:

4.1. Accommodation Supply Expansion and Full-Cycle Product Design

Historical experience demonstrates that accommodation capacity is the hardware foundation for realizing economic effects. Seoul achieved over 20% annual growth in hotel supply before the Olympics, and Barcelona undertook large-scale hotel construction. Brisbane's current accommodation supply still faces a gap. Policy priorities should include streamlining hotel development approvals and providing investment incentives. Simultaneously, drawing on Sydney's systematic tourism strategy, Brisbane should establish a full-cycle tourism product system covering pre-Games brand building and post-Games convention cultivation.

4.2. Urban Renewal Dimension: Sustainable Planning for Post-Games Legacy

Learning from Athens' lesson, Brisbane needs to plan post-Games uses during the construction phase. IOC Coordination Commission member Duane Kale noted that Brisbane will use temporary and existing facilities more smartly. This lightweight legacy model should be further extended to transform venues into multi-purpose complexes for sports tourism, convention and exhibition centers, and community sports spaces after the Games [9].

4.3. Global Exposure Dimension: Systematic Marketing Conversion Strategy

Sydney's experience shows that a systematic tourism strategy is key to converting exposure into visitor flow. Brisbane should launch international marketing 7 to 8 years in advance, deeply integrating the Olympic narrative with Queensland's natural and cultural resources. The Brisbane Organizing Committee's released vision of Believe. Belong. Become. lays the foundation for an inclusive destination narrative.

4.4. Institutionalizing Community Participation Mechanisms

The historical lesson of Expo 88 requires Brisbane to establish institutionalized community participation mechanisms. Specific measures include: establishing an Olympic Tourism Community Advisory Committee composed of local government, the Organizing Committee, the tourism industry, and community resident representatives; exploring a Community Tourism Fund model to ensure tourism benefits reach affected communities; and drawing on Vancouver Winter Olympics experience to formulate short-term rental regulations to protect housing affordability [10].

5. Conclusion

This paper systematically compares the tourism effects of previous Olympic Games from 1984 to 2024, assesses the expected impact of the 2032 Brisbane Olympics on local tourism, and proposes policy recommendations accordingly. For Brisbane, the expected impact manifests across four dimensions: at the economic effects level, considerable benefits are anticipated but face the hard constraint of accommodation supply (currently only 24% of 2032 demand has been achieved); at the urban renewal level, A$19 billion in infrastructure investment will enhance carrying capacity, but post-Games utilization efficiency determines long-term outcomes, requiring Brisbane to draw on both the positive experience of Sydney's careful planning and the negative lesson of Athens' heavy construction, light operation; at the global exposure level, the visibility leap represents the greatest opportunity, but vigilance is needed against destination disillusionment caused by the gap between the extraordinary urban image presented during the event and visitors' actual post-Games experiences; at the social tensions level, the historical trauma of Expo 88 necessitates the establishment of

institutionalized community participation mechanisms—without these, social tensions will erode the positive value of the other three dimensions.

Based on the above expected impacts, this paper proposes an inclusive tourism growth policy framework: the economic effects dimension focuses on accommodation supply expansion and full-cycle product design; the urban renewal dimension emphasizes sustainable planning for post-Games legacy, using post-Games uses to reverse-engineer construction decisions; the global exposure dimension requires launching systematic marketing conversion 7 to 8 years in advance to transform the visibility gap into a brand leap, while maintaining moderate expectation management; the social tensions dimension necessitates the establishment of an Olympic Tourism Community Advisory Committee, exploration of a Community Tourism Fund model, and formulation of short-term rental regulations to respond to historical trauma through institutionalized participation.

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