The Confluence of Historic Preservation and Innovation Aversion in an Urban Sports Stadium

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OVERVIEW

Public and private owners of historic sports facilities are charged with preserving not only the architectural features of a stadium, but also the cultural and sporting traditions that live within them.

(Pfleegor, Seifried, & Soebbing, 2013)
OVERVIEW

Stadium modernization plans that call for major renovations or stadium replacement altogether (e.g., Seifried & Tutka, 2016) may threaten historic preservation efforts.
OVERVIEW

On the other hand, stadium owners with particularly strong attachments to the past may be reluctant to consider major changes to a facility’s design or operations.
In this study, we explore how an owner’s preference for historic preservation could lead to innovation aversion—a phenomenon in which the owner is unwilling to pursue proposals to modernize the stadium, a decision that could negatively impact the organization itself as well as impede growth in the nearby community.
The purpose of this study was to identify the reasons behind a facility owner’s reluctance to pursue plans to modernize a major urban sports stadium.
LOFTUS PARK
US$109.6 million / R1.45 billion
METHOD

Conducted in-person interviews with key stakeholders

Attended and took notes at two public stakeholder meetings

Collected and reviewed media reports and internal and public documents related to the Hatfield Campus Village plan
INNOVATION AVERSION AT LOFTUS

Loftus ownership discouraged the implementation of innovative business approaches

Modernizing the stadium
Expanding the event calendar to include non-traditional events
Implementing new marketing strategies
CONTRAINTS

Desire to preserve stadium’s (and nation’s) rich rugby tradition
Need for additional investment to justify stadium modernization spending
Fears about the South African economy
Lack of personnel to implement new management strategies
IMPLICATIONS

The desire for historic preservation may contribute to innovation aversion among stadium owners
Some sport managers may view historic preservation and innovation adoption as mutually exclusive strategies

Favoring one approach over the other may alienate existing fans and fail to capture new ones, thereby inhibiting the organization’s growth and threatening its long-term sustainability
Thank you.

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