

# Economic Impact of the 2030 Commonwealth Games on Ahmedabad: A Qualitative Study

Yohaán Shodhan  
yohaanshodhan1@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This paper examines the expected economic contribution of Ahmedabad's 2030 Commonwealth Games bid and its sequenced 2036 Olympic bid, and asks whether sequential mega-event hosting can drive infrastructure-led urbanisation and long-term economic legacy in an emerging-economy context.

**Methodology:** A qualitative case study design is employed. Primary data came from semi-structured expert interviews with four respondents spanning urban development, industry and civic policy, journalism, and real estate. Transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis with hybrid deductive–inductive coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006), with findings cross-validated across respondents and contextualised against the comparative literature on Delhi 2010, Gold Coast 2018, and Birmingham 2022.

**Findings:** Six themes emerged: 1) *The Deadline Catalyst* — the Games compress multi-decadal infrastructure investment into a single planning cycle; 2) *Financial Discipline* — structural anti-corruption procurement and realistic revenue modelling are preconditions for legacy value; 3) *The Holistic Sports Economy* — performance technology, sports medicine, biosensors, and nutritional science offer a more durable employment legacy than construction and hospitality; 4) *Unified Governance* — a single accountable delivery body is a prerequisite for on-time delivery; 5) *The Coming-Out Moment* — the Games are India's global-stage debut, with UNESCO World Heritage City status an underused branding asset; and 6) *Urban Equity* — affordability and inclusive design determine whether the economic multiplier reaches residents across all income groups.

**Practical implications:** Planners should design all infrastructure for long-term utility from the outset, establish a single delivery body with statutory powers, adopt open digital procurement overseen by an independent international custodian, embed holistic sports-ecosystem investment in national industrial policy, apply universal design across all Games-related and city infrastructure, subject revenue projections to independent audit, and price post-Games infrastructure for affordability across income groups.

**Originality/value:** This study offers a triangulated picture of mega-event economic potential through the first qualitative multi-stakeholder account of a city pursuing a sequential Commonwealth-to-Olympics hosting strategy in South Asia.

June 2026  
Vol 8, No 2.

Keywords: *Mega-event legacy; Commonwealth Games; Olympic Games bid; urban infrastructure; emerging economies; governance reform; Ahmedabad*

## **INTRODUCTION**

On 26 November 2025, delegates of the 74 Commonwealth member nations ratified Ahmedabad (Ahmedabad), India, as the host of the 2030 Centenary Commonwealth Games at the Commonwealth Sport General Assembly in Glasgow (Commonwealth Sport, 2025). The decision places the landmark edition of the Games — one hundred years after Hamilton 1930 — in a UNESCO World Heritage city of roughly eight million people and marks India's first hosting of a major multi-sport event since the Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games. The scale of the infrastructure programme that will follow, and the institutional reforms required to deliver it on time, will be evaluated against both the reputational failure of Delhi 2010 and the institutional successes of Gold Coast 2018 and Birmingham 2022.

The global mega-event industry has shifted decisively toward emerging economies in the twenty-first century. Commonwealth Sport's own Games Reset agenda has repositioned the event as a more financially disciplined, developmentally oriented movement, and the selection of Ahmedabad signals that emerging-economy hosts are now central rather than peripheral to the Games' future (Commonwealth Sport, 2025). Direct infrastructure investment linked to hosting can run to several billion US dollars per cycle, with multiplier effects across construction, hospitality, transport, and digital infrastructure (Preuss, 2004).

Over a period of time, the studies on the economics of mega-events have been increasing. The Gold Coast 2018 proved that an event strategy with a narrow scope can help to rebrand a city and achieve a sustained tourism growth (Leopkey and Parent, 2012). The Games infrastructure in places with underdeveloped urban areas can be used to trigger regeneration in underserved urban areas (Girginov, 2013; McKenzie et al., 2024). The iconic cases of infrastructure-based urban repositioning by hosting mega-events continue to be Beijing 2008 and London 2012 (Cornelissen, 2010; Gold and Gold, 2016). Modern frameworks of legacy identify a broader set of economic impacts compared to the ones identified in the early literature - infrastructure assets, real-estate transformation, human capital development, destination branding and productivity improvements through enhanced urban connectivity (Preuss, 2004; Kassens-Noor, 2012; Gratton and Preuss, 2008). Hosting can no longer be viewed as a single event in the life of revenue but as a multi-decadal policy intervention, the value of which is realised over the decades following the closing ceremony.

The literature, nonetheless, leaves a specific gap. The economic consequences of Commonwealth Games hosting in emerging-economy contexts have been studied primarily through the lens of Delhi 2010, where fragmented governance, procurement corruption, and optimism bias in cost estimates produced a widely documented failure (Majumdar, 2011; Kassens-Noor and Kayal, 2016; Müller, 2015). What remains underexamined is whether the institutional lessons of Delhi 2010 can be structurally designed around in a subsequent Indian host, and whether a second Indian Commonwealth Games can produce the multi-decadal infrastructure legacy that Delhi did not. Ahmedabad is also positioned by Indian planners as a rehearsal for a 2036 Olympic bid — a sequential hosting strategy that raises the stakes for infrastructure

June 2026

Vol 8. No 2.

quality and post-Games utilisation — but the 2030 Games stand as a consequential urban development event in their own right.

The city of Ahmedabad has a unique context in terms of planning. The Gati Shakti National Master Plan (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2021) offers a framework for integrating mega-event infrastructure into national objectives of connectivity, and developments in smart-city infrastructure, AI-driven crowd modelling, and digital procurement reduced operational risk as compared to those in Delhi 2010 (Flyvbjerg, 2014; IOC, 2021). The city is a combination of a UNESCO World Heritage designation, a high industrial base in pharmaceuticals and textiles, and a record of state-level governance that has been a central feature of the Gujarat development story over the last twenty years. Whether such structural benefits can be converted into a successful 2030 Games - and whether the planners of Ahmedabad have learnt the lessons of the 2010 Delhi Games - is the question that this study sets out to answer.

This paper is informed by three research questions:

RQ1 — What is the prevailing situation of economic planning surrounding the mega-event in Ahmedabad in the run-up to the 2030 Commonwealth Games?

RQ2 - What are the expected economic, infrastructural and social effects across city infrastructure, tourism, employment and skills, technology and social inclusion?

RQ3 - What are the main implementation issues and governance restrictions that hinder the realisation of long-term economic legacy?

The paper is further divided into five other sections. The literature review scans the academic literature on the economic legacies of mega-event hosting, urban infrastructure multipliers, and governance in hosts in emerging economies. The methodology outlines the qualitative case study design, the expert-interview panel and the thematic analysis framework. In the findings section, the six themes in the interviews and comparative literature are presented. The discussion relates these findings to the three research questions. The conclusion contains limitations, practical implications and future research directions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Mega-Event Economic Legacy: Foundations and Critical Perspectives**

The economic analysis of mega-event hosting is conceptually based on the idea of economic analysis by Preuss (2004). His main point is that the Games represent not a compression of decades of urban growth into a politically definite time period but rather a kind of compression of decades of urban growth into a political time limit. Kassens-Noor (2012) expands this framing to transport and urban infrastructure, which she identifies as both the area in which the planning aspirations most often do not reflect the outcomes and the domain where planning aspirations most often are incommensurate with the outcomes. Leopkey and Parent (2012) present a significant difference between the general event benefits, and sustainable long-term legacy, contending that the durable gains should be planned during the bid stage, rather than assumed to follow automatically out of hosting.

June 2026

Vol 8. No 2.

The sceptical counterweight is given by Zimbalist (2015) and Baade and Matheson (2016). Regular reviews of host-city performance indicate that hosting is a net financial loss in most instances, with whatever positive returns that exist, they are located in non-monetisable intangibles: civic pride and international visibility. According to Baade and Matheson (2016), there is a lot of heterogeneity among hosts: those that implement existing infrastructure ( Los Angeles 1984) prove to be better than those that build the infrastructure extensively on a large scale (Athens 2004, Rio 2016). This heterogeneity is important analytically, i.e. results are influenced by institutional planning choices as opposed to being preconditioned by host selection. Kobierecki and Pierzgaliski (2022) report that in four host countries between 2010 and 2016, there is no statistically significant impact of hosting a mega-event on the national GDP growth. In the latest longitudinal study, which includes sixty-three events between 1964 and 2018, Lang, Gogishvili, and Müller (2025) discover that the level of economic freedom, i.e. competitive procurement and involvement of the private sector, predicts the event profitability more effectively than any other institutional factor.

### **Governance Failure and the Indian Context**

Müller (2015) diagnoses the structural pathologies of mega-event planning as a recurring seven-symptom syndrome: overpromising of benefits, underestimation of costs, and the suspension of normal legal and regulatory standards, among others — a profile that fits Delhi 2010 closely. Flyvbjerg (2014) and Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius and Rothengatter (2003) identify cost overruns as a statistical regularity in large infrastructure projects, driven by systematic optimism bias and strategic misrepresentation rather than mere incompetence. These frameworks shed light on the institutional reasons behind the budget bloat in the Delhi 2010 case, which Majumdar & Mehta (2010) document as an initial estimate of approximately ₹650 crore that was blown to a final bill of approximately USD 4.1 billion, or a sixteen-fold overrun, compared with a global average cost overrun across all Summer Olympics since 1960 of 172 per cent in real terms (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Majumdar (2011) finds that Delhi's short-term post-Games legacy fell short of both its sporting and symbolic ambitions, and that the event produced reputational failure rather than the global-city image its organisers sought. Majumdar (2012) later argues that Delhi's most enduring legacy was an unintended one: the mass civic mobilisation against corruption that the Games helped trigger, which reshaped Indian political discourse in the early 2010s. Kassens-Noor and Kayal (2016) conclude that the Delhi Commonwealth Games were weakly integrated with the city's urban master plan, and that event-specific demands distorted rather than advanced the city's pre-existing development priorities.

Kudtarkar (2020) sets out the structural weaknesses of the Indian public-private partnership (PPP) model: inadequate risk allocation, limited government project-management capacity, and a tendency for risk to revert to the public exchequer when projects encounter difficulty. These weaknesses are directly relevant to the ambitious PPP structures proposed for Ahmedabad's venue development and post-Games management. PwC India (2019) provides scale context: fewer than one hundred Indian sports facilities meet international standards, and the Khelo India programme, while significant, has closed only a portion of the infrastructure gap that Commonwealth Games hosting would require.

### **Urban Regeneration, Soft Power, and Place Branding**

June 2026

Vol 8, No 2.

The most sustained legacy effects found in the literature on urban regeneration are those that happen when Games infrastructure is integrated within an already existing city development strategy, as opposed to Games infrastructure being imposed as a stand-alone event provision. The analysis of Manchester 2002, by Smith and Fox, is instructive: the Commonwealth Games did not prompt a new development, but a previously planned programme of regeneration in East Manchester was accelerated and funded. This event themed, as opposed to event led, model of regeneration is consistent with the Games infrastructure integration into the Gati Shakti National Master Plan of the regeneration model of Ahmedabad. McKenzie et al. (2024) extend the discussion to Birmingham 2022, where they record the regeneration of Perry Barr, as well as the risks of gentrification that accompany rapid neighbourhood change - a distributional issue directly relevant to the peripheral development areas of Ahmedabad. Using 20 years of data on residential property in the capital, Jakar and Philippou (2025) discover that the benefits of regeneration are real but spatially concentrated and unevenly distributed in support of the argument that deliberate redistribution mechanisms are structural aspects of legacy planning.

Cornelissen (2010) and Grix, Brannagan and Houlihan (2015) study the geopolitical dimension of hosting. Emerging economies — China most paradigmatically in 2008 — deploy mega-events as instruments of soft power and national self-presentation. Grix et al. (2015) distinguish prestige-oriented hosting from utility-oriented developmental hosting, a distinction that maps directly onto the shift from the Delhi 2010 logic to the ambition stated for Ahmedabad 2030. Kavaratzis (2004) argues that city branding is most sustainably achieved through physical urban enhancement rather than marketing campaigns — a finding consistent with Ahmedabad's strategy of leveraging its UNESCO World Heritage City status through physical transformation of the old city alongside the Games infrastructure.

### **The Research Gap**

Taken together, this literature establishes a clear conceptual framework for analysing mega-event economic legacy: the deadline catalyst mechanism, the cost-overrun pathology, the governance requirements for on-time delivery, the event-themed regeneration model, and the prestige-versus-utility distinction in soft-power hosting. Two gaps nonetheless remain. First, the economic legacy of Commonwealth Games hosting in emerging-economy contexts has been examined almost entirely through the Delhi 2010 failure case; there is no empirical account of whether a subsequent Indian Commonwealth host can structurally design around the Delhi failure modes. Second, the institutional conditions under which a Commonwealth Games host can also function as the proving ground for a subsequent Olympic bid have not been studied — a configuration that raises the standards for infrastructure quality and governance discipline beyond those typically applied to standalone Commonwealth hosting. This study addresses both gaps by examining Ahmedabad's planning environment through a qualitative, multi-stakeholder expert interview design.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative case study design to examine the expected economic impact of the 2030 Commonwealth Games on Ahmedabad. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the subject is prospective: final budgets, attendance, and governance outcomes are not yet known, which rules out the

June 2026

Vol 8. No 2.

quantitative impact modelling used in post-event studies. It is rather a question of how the city is being prepared and whether the Games have any economic potential, rather than how planners, industry leaders, journalists and real estate developers currently interpret the preparation of the city and whether the Games have any economic potential or not. The entire research design has been summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Design Summary

Dimension	Specification
Research Design	Qualitative case study
Primary Data Method	Semi-structured expert interviews (N = 4)
Respondents	Paavan Bakeri — urban developer and civic stakeholder; Mukesh Patel — industry leader and civic policy advisor; Jumana Shah — journalist and editor, India Today; Shaan Zaveri — real estate developer
Sampling Strategy	Purposive / expert sampling across four stakeholder domains
Secondary Sources	Peer-reviewed literature; comparative mega-event case studies (Delhi 2010, Gold Coast 2018, Birmingham 2022)
Analytical Framework	Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006); hybrid deductive–inductive coding; cross-respondent triangulation
Validity Measures	Respondent credibility assessment; reflexivity; multi-stakeholder and literature triangulation
Ethical Considerations	Informed consent; voluntary participation; anonymisation offered and declined by all respondents
Limitations	Prospective subject matter; stakeholder positionality; variance in interview format across respondents

## Case Study Design

Ahmedabad is considered to be an isolated case. This study is appropriate for the case study approach for two reasons. First, the planning environment of Ahmedabad is conditioned by a particular combination of factors, i.e. the 2030 Commonwealth Games requirement, the Gati Shakti National Master Plan, the industrial base in Gujarat, and the UNESCO World Heritage status of the city, which cannot be meaningfully compared using cross-national aggregate data. Second, the research questions are regarding how the planning decisions are being made and why certain economic results are to be expected, not about isolating variables or measuring cause and effect. These are the questions that can be directly answered by a case study (Yin, 2018).

## Primary Data: Expert Interviews

Primary data were collected through semi-structured expert interviews with four respondents, purposively sampled to span four stakeholder domains:

- Paavan Bakeri — a senior figure in Ahmedabad’s real estate and urban development industry, with first-hand civic involvement in the infrastructure planning for the 2030 Games.
- Mukesh Patel — an industry leader and civic policy advisor with extensive knowledge of Gujarat’s economic and institutional environment.
- Jumana Shah — a journalist and editor at *India Today*, offering an independent media perspective on urban and infrastructure policy.
- Shaan Zaveri — a real estate developer, contributing a perspective on capital deployment, post-Games venue utilisation, and PPP structures.

Respondents were selected on four criteria: sustained professional engagement with the economic, infrastructural, or civic dimensions of the Ahmedabad Commonwealth Games; awareness of relevant international precedents (Delhi 2010, Gold Coast 2018, Birmingham 2022); familiarity with the specific venues and planning projects associated with the 2030 Games; and willingness to discuss both opportunities and risks. Expert interviews are a well-established method in urban economics and public policy research for accessing practitioner knowledge that is not yet available in documentary form (Bogner et al., 2009).

The semi-structured format allowed for consistency across the ten thematic areas covered in the interview instrument — corresponding to the codes summarised in Table 2 — while leaving room for each respondent to raise emergent issues from their own domain (Patton, 2015). Bakeri and Shah were interviewed by video call, with both interviews recorded and transcribed verbatim. Patel and Zaveri completed the same instrument in written form. Written responses are a recognised alternative for expert respondents who prefer precise written expression to spontaneous speech (Bogner et al., 2009), though the variance in format across respondents is acknowledged as a limitation below.

## **Secondary Data and Triangulation**

Interview data are triangulated with a systematic review of the scholarly literature on mega-event economic impact, urban infrastructure legacy, and sports governance in emerging economies. This literature provides the points of comparison of practitioner knowledge (Delhi 2010, Gold Coast 2018, Birmingham 2022) and allows one to see where practitioner knowledge intersects and where the scholarship differs. The Findings show the detailed citation map of each of the themes.

## **Analytical Framework**

All four interview transcripts and written responses were analysed through Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic approach: familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The approach was applied iteratively rather than linearly, with each phase revisited as the analysis developed. Hybrid coding was used to combine deductive codes derived from the research questions (economic impact, infrastructure, tourism, employment, governance) with inductive codes that emerged from the respondents’ own language: the deadline catalyst and metabolic-rate analogy (Bakeri); restraint-as-virtue and friction-reduction logic

(Patel); the supply–demand distinction and affordability imperative (Shah); and the PPP-discipline and post-Games utilisation framing (Zaveri).

Cross-respondent triangulation was conducted at two levels. Within each theme, convergences and divergences across the four respondents were mapped to identify robust findings and areas of genuine analytical tension. At the aggregate level, the cross-respondent picture was set against the peer-reviewed literature. Six themes were identified:

- T1 — The Deadline Catalyst: infrastructure as a long-term economic multiplier.
- T2 — Financial Discipline: financial risk realism and governance of spending.
- T3 — The Holistic Sports Economy: development of skills ecosystems beyond the coaching paradigm.
- T4 — Unified Governance: centralised authority of delivery and institutional reform.
- T5 — The Coming-Out Moment: legacy, soft power, and destination branding.
- T6 — Urban Equity: accessibility, affordability, and inclusive design — an emergent theme that was enhanced by a multi-respondent dataset.

The comparative references to Delhi 2010, Gold Coast 2018, and Birmingham 2022 that are repeated in all four interviews are put in dialogue with the literature throughout the findings.

Table 2 provides a mapping of the six themes, the codes and the relative emphasis of those codes. ‘Codes’ indicates the number of different analytic concepts that were found within the hybrid coding process for each theme and are presented in the final column in their own words. ‘Emphasis’ is the researcher’s analytic judgement about how salient each theme is across the data set and is determined by how often and in-depth the theme was referenced across the four respondents without prompting, and not just how many times the theme was mentioned.

Table 2: Thematic Framework — Codes, Emphasis and Coverage

Theme	Emphasis	Codes	Deductive + Inductive Codes
T1 — The Deadline Catalyst	High	6	Economic catalyst, legacy ROI, white-elephant avoidance, deadline framing, metabolic-rate analogy, friction-reduction logic
T2 — Financial Discipline	High	6	Budget overruns, anti-corruption, open bidding, external audit, Sabarmati Riverfront cautionary case, restraint-as-virtue framing
T3 — The Holistic Sports Economy	Medium	5	Startup ecosystem, sports medicine, biosensors, Make in India, vocational training, skills-that-travel logic

T4 — Unified Governance	High	6	Unified oversight, Delhi 2010 fragmentation, dress rehearsals, venue handover timeline, jugaad critique, independent legacy authority
T5 — The Coming-Out Moment	High	6	Gold Coast model, Birmingham regeneration, UNESCO branding, crowding-out risk, supply–demand distinction, long-term sports culture
T6 — Urban Equity	Medium	5	Low-cost infrastructure, universal design, Para sport, last-mile connectivity, community sport, sport as social good.

### **Rigour, Reflexivity, and Ethics**

Several steps were taken to strengthen credibility. All interpretive claims are anchored in verbatim quotations; the professional backgrounds of all four respondents are described in detail; cross-respondent triangulation and systematic comparison with peer-reviewed literature provide two independent checks on the interpretations offered; and the research process and coding procedure are documented to allow the analysis to be followed by other readers.

Positionality considerations apply differently to each respondent. Bakeri’s commercial exposure to the Ahmedabad infrastructure market creates an incentive toward optimistic framing, partially offset by his spontaneous introduction of governance risk and inflated revenue projections (with the Sabarmati Riverfront volunteered as a cautionary case). Patel’s standing in the industry produces notably restrained language on financial discipline. Shah contributes the most independent critical perspective, particularly on affordability and the demand side of infrastructure planning. Zaveri’s real estate background introduces a capital-deployment lens that foregrounds asset utilisation and measurable return on infrastructure investment. The researcher’s contextual familiarity with Ahmedabad’s development landscape carries a risk of confirmatory reading, addressed through disciplined application of the Braun and Clarke (2006) coding process and deliberate engagement with the sceptical mega-event literature (Zimbalist, 2015; Baade and Matheson, 2016).

Informed consent was obtained from all four respondents, who participated voluntarily and were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage. All four were offered anonymisation, and each declined. No personal or sensitive information beyond what was voluntarily offered for the record was collected (Bogner et al., 2009).

### **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This section presents the thematic analysis of four semi-structured expert interviews with Paavan Bakeri, an urban developer and civic stakeholder; Mukesh Patel, an industry leader and civic policy advisor; Jumana Shah, a journalist and editor at India Today; and Shaan Zaveri, a real estate developer. The 2036

June 2026

Vol 8, No 2.

Olympic bid functions as a contextual amplifier in several of its accounts. The analysis follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model with hybrid coding: deductive codes from the research questions and inductive codes from the respondents' own language. Six themes were identified, each representing a conceptual axis. Evidence is anchored in verbatim quotations.

### **Theme 1: The Deadline Catalyst**

The most consistent theme across the four interviews concerns the relationship between mega-event infrastructure investment and long-term urban economic productivity. None of the respondents frames the Games primarily as a revenue event; all four characterise the Games as a mechanism that compresses decades of infrastructure development into a single, politically mandated planning cycle.

#### **The Deadline Mechanism**

Bakeri articulates the deadline thesis most explicitly: the core economic value of hosting is not the twelve or sixteen days of competition but the institutional pressure the Games create to deliver infrastructure that would otherwise take three to four decades to complete.

*"We are not building for an event, but we are using this as an occasion — as a deadline, actually — to finish the city infrastructure, which will have fifty, sixty years of multi-decadal benefits." (Bakeri, 2025)*

The academic counterpart is Kassens-Noor's (2012) identification of the Olympic catalytic effect, supported by Gold and Gold's (2016) documentation of how Sydney 2000, Barcelona 1992, and London 2012 each used the Games to accelerate pre-existing renewal agendas. Bakeri illustrates the mechanism through the Godavi peripheral area on an accelerated town planning schedule, the airport–Motera–GIFT City metro extension otherwise deferred by two to three decades, and the ₹6,000 crore Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave anchoring real-estate appreciation around Narendra Modi Stadium.

Patel applies the rationales of deadline to a rationality of productivity: infrastructures are not valuable because they are visible but because they lower the transaction costs of everyday urban life. His argument of a friction-reduction (less time in transit, less logistics cost, more predictable urban service) transforms the deadline thesis into concrete economic output and aligns more with the analysis of transport legacy as a major driver of enduring mega-event value by Kassens-Noor (2012). Zaveri supports the capital allocation aspect: roads, bridges, airport upgrades, hotels, and housing stock have the longest post-Games economic life, and he advocates upgrading existing infrastructure over building new infrastructure - a standpoint that coincides with the finding of Baade and Matheson (2016), who discovered that hosts that rely on existing infrastructure perform better than those that build new infrastructure.

#### **The Multiplier Effect and its Limits**

The economic logic underlying both Bakeri's and Patel's accounts is a Keynesian multiplier: infrastructure investment generates secondary economic activity through supply chain linkages, employment, and real-estate appreciation. Bakeri uses a physiological metaphor to convey the self-reinforcing character of this effect:

June 2026

Vol 8, No 2.

*"It is not just the calories you expend while you are running. Even thereafter, your metabolic rate increases. Even when you are not exercising, you are burning more calories. So it is just like this for the games — it is just meant for the twelve days, but real estate appreciates, infrastructure multiplies." (Bakeri, 2025)*

The metaphor of the body-as-city makes the returns of compounds a naturalisation of biological returns as opposed to empirical returns. The optimism that it implies is tempered by both Bakeri and Patel when it comes to the actual infrastructure decision-making process: each of the infrastructure decisions must be accompanied by a well-planned post-Games utilisation strategy, with the conversion of the athletes' village to student housing cited as the working example.

Another more acute qualification that none of the other respondents brings up as directly is that supply does not necessarily make demand. The addition of the hotel rooms and sports venue only increases the capacity, but does not in itself lead to increased visitors or users. Rooms, she says, are supply; demand needs an independent creation of content, including annual events, cultural experiences, and new attractions. As a warning case of over-ambitious projections, and as a structural feature of all large infrastructure planning, the Sabarmati Riverfront and Bakeri as an independent volunteer entity undertaking it, and Shah as a demand-side critic of it, all constitute a cross-respondent challenge to the optimism bias which Flyvbjerg (2014) identifies as a structural feature of all large infrastructure planning.

## **Theme 2: Financial Discipline**

Thematically different to the Deadlines Catalyst, Theme 2 encapsulates the convergent perspective across the respondents, that financial discipline rather than the amount of spending is what will dictate whether the Games will leave a lasting legacy or not. The theme is a realist amendment to the optimism inherent in Theme 1, with all the respondents suggesting a different tool of governance.

### **The Overestimation Pathology**

Bakeri pinpoints the symptomatic pathology of mega-event hosting as optimism bias - the systematic overestimation of revenues and underestimation of costs - to which the case of the Delhi 2010 mega-event is the closest analogue.

*"We always tend to either overestimate the benefits and underestimate the cost. This has historically happened for all Olympics and international events." (Bakeri, 2025)*

The records of Zimbalist (2015) document that all Summer Olympics since 1960 have far exceeded their original budget in real terms, with tourism revenues being affected the most. The policy stance of the pathology is reinforced by Patel: the most crucial financial choice is not the amount of spending but what not to construct. The concept of restraint is introduced as an economic virtue instead of a failure of ambition - an inversion of the usual discourse of mega-event finances that is consistent with the finding of Kobierecki and Pierzgaliski (2022) that there is no statistically significant effect of GDP growth on the event across four host countries between 2010 and 2016. Zaveri bases the same concern on the terms of capital deployment and recommends PPP model as a mechanism of minimizing the burden on the public

exchequer and avoiding unsustainable debt and replicating the fiscal discipline of a well-managed privately owned enterprise.

### **Anti-Corruption by Structural Design**

Bakeri's most distinctive contribution to this theme is a structural — rather than merely moral — anti-corruption prescription for procurement:

*"You submit your bids electronically — they are opened by a different entity, not from the state of Gujarat, some international auditor. The bidders don't know what the other person has bid. Otherwise they call each other: there are ten bidders and they form a ring."* (Bakeri, 2025)

The proposal is grounded in mechanism design theory (Myerson, 1979): the information architecture determines whether collusive procurement outcomes can be prevented. A reform agenda centred on external auditing, realistic revenue modelling, and the elimination of open-ended central government deficit guarantees — which Bakeri identifies as a moral hazard removing budget discipline — is consistent with the institutional economics literature on procurement governance in mega-projects (Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius and Rothengatter, 2003). Zaveri's complementary recommendation to employ global experts and eliminate red tape, together with Lang, Gogishvili, and Müller's (2025) finding that competitive procurement is among the strongest predictors of mega-event profitability across sixty-three events since 1964, frames structural governance reform as the precondition for other financial benefits.

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), which tendered contracts for the London 2012 Games, offering SMEs 70 per cent of the contracts, using the CompeteFor portal with openly published bid records and electronic tendering, is the closest real-world equivalent of Bakeri's sealed-bid, independently-custodied procurement system. The ODA managed to spend its own construction programme to the tune of around £1 billion, and the procurement model was officially touted to other host organisations around the world as a model to follow (UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2012). A comparison with the situation in Delhi 2010 is telling: the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC, 2011) reported that the difference in costs between tenders for different venues, ranging between 30 per cent and 100 per cent, was due to collusive tendering rings, which is what a sealed-bid electronic tender system is supposed to thwart. Though it is not the same as Bakeri's proposal, the principles of transparency and competition are in line with the conclusions of Lang, Gogishvili, and Müller (2025), who revealed that competitive procurement is one of the best predictors of profitability for events since 1964.

### **Theme 3: The Holistic Sports Economy**

Theme 3 moves beyond the conventional framing of mega-event employment as temporary construction and hospitality work. All four respondents argue that the Games offer an opportunity to build a structurally differentiated economic ecosystem whose employment and skills benefits outlast the event cycle.

### **Beyond the Coaching Paradigm**

June 2026

Vol 8. No 2.

Bakeri identifies a prevailing Indian sports investment ideology — what he calls the “coaching paradigm” — that equates sports infrastructure with physical structures and coaching alone and omits the full support ecosystem that international high-performance sport requires.

*"In India, we think sports means infrastructure is just coaching. But if the guy doesn't have enough protein or enough of a nice diet, he will not be able to perform. And if that person cannot buy performance-measuring gadgets affordably, what is the point? How does he keep improving?" (Bakeri, 2025)*

This diagnosis fits directly into the nine-pillar framework of sports system capacity of De Bosscher et al. (2008): India is structurally weak on pillar 6 (athlete support services) and 9 (research infrastructure and ecosystem development): even though India scored reasonably on pillar 5 (facilities) and 7 (coach provision), these areas have structurally weak scores. Patel extends the argument to employment: the Games need not concentrate on creating jobs that are specific to the event but should focus on developing skills that travel, such as becoming skilled in hospitality standards, health services, knowledge of digital urban management and event operations skills that will travel in the wider economy after the closing ceremony.

### **Make in India and the Startup Ecosystem**

Based on the diagnosis of the coaching paradigm, Bakeri sketches a vision of the Games as the catalyst to a sports technology start-up ecosystem that can tap into the existing strengths of Gujarat such as pharmaceuticals, life sciences, and IIT-based research institutions, to build capacity in sports medicine, physiotherapy, biosensors, nutritional science, and performance analytics. He expresses the systemic interdependence he regards between these areas by using a metaphor of a rainforest:

*"Instead of seeing it in isolation, we have to see it as a rainforest. Everybody contributes — in a rainforest, you have one organism dying to nourish another. Every sector has its place, and they feed off each other." (Bakeri, 2025)*

The naturalisation of economic diversification as a self-organising organic process, instead of a policy intervention, is consistent with the evolutionary economics literature on the formation of industrial clusters as a self-organising organic process (Porter, 1990). Zaveri justifies the alignment of the Make in India with the procurement side: strategic local sourcing of building materials, sports equipment, and sports apparel - areas where the textile industry of Gujarat has a natural manufacturing edge - would retain the economic multiplier within the country instead of leakage to foreign contractors. Shah adds the most cutting-edge requirement: the long-term effect of the infrastructure post-Games will be dependent on whether or not the infrastructure is actually used, and that cannot be assumed. Gratton and Preuss (2008) here echo this warning by noting that the effects of mega-event employment have a short lifespan unless the institutionally absorbed trained labour is absorbed into the mainstream economy - an empirical question that will start to be answered by the five-to-ten-year build-up to the 2030 mega-event.

The four respondents' views of the sectors that make up the holistic sports economy do not represent speculations. The current market size estimates and projections for 2030 for each sector are given in Table 3 and taken from a recent industry study. The figures put the interviewees' prescriptions in perspective

June 2026

Vol 8. No 2.

with the size of the opportunity available in the Indian market, and that is expected to grow significantly before the 2030 Games. Interestingly, at 14 per cent CAGR, the overall India sports economy, as estimated by Deloitte and Google's (2024) Think Sports report, is expected to touch USD 130 billion by 2030, which is nearly double India's GDP growth rate. It is at the turning point of this expansion that the Games arrive, and the interviewees are all collectively trying to answer the question of whether or not Ahmedabad can grab a piece of these sectors.

Table 3: India Sports Economy — Sector Market Sizes and 2030 Projections

Sector	Expert(s)	2024 Market Size	2030 Projection
India sports economy (overall)	All four	USD 52 billion	USD 130 billion (14% CAGR) [Deloitte/Google, 2024]
Sports technology (AI/ML, IoT, wearables)	Bakeri	USD 442 million	USD 830M–USD 1.5B (13–25% CAGR) [IMARC, 2024; Grand View, 2025]
Sports analytics and performance data	Bakeri	USD 48.9 million	USD 181 million (15.7% CAGR) [IMARC, 2024]
Sports medicine (rehabilitation, injury prevention)	Bakeri	USD 220–279 million	USD 360–620 million (5–9% CAGR) [IMARC, 2024; Grand View, 2025]
Sports nutrition	Bakeri	USD 1.79 billion	USD 3.31 billion (6.5% CAGR) [IMARC, 2024]
Sports goods and equipment manufacturing	Zaveri	USD 4.88 billion	~USD 7.5 billion (7.4% CAGR) [Expert Market Research, 2024]
Sports apparel and performance wear	Zaveri	USD 680–706 million	USD 1.6–2.2 billion (14–15% CAGR) [TechSci, 2024; Maximize, 2025]
Sports fabric (Gujarat textile relevance)	Zaveri	USD 1.66 billion	USD 3.47 billion (7.9% CAGR) [IMARC, 2024]

Cultural and heritage tourism	Patel	USD 31.98 billion	USD 47.5 billion (6.6% CAGR) [Grand View Research, 2024]
Sports tourism (dedicated)	Patel, Zaveri	USD 45 million	~USD 175 million (22.3% CAGR) [Grand View Research, 2025]
Spectator sports and ticketing	Shah	~USD 1.66 billion	USD 2.41 billion (6.4% CAGR) [Mordor Intelligence, 2025]
Sports media and broadcasting	All four	~USD 1.7 billion	USD 2.4 billion+ (6–14% CAGR) [Mordor Intelligence, 2025; FICCI-Nangia, 2024]

*Note: The sports medicine figures are subject to various differences in the definition of the scope of sports medicine. The narrow formal definition of sports tourism (Grand View Research) does not include cricket-related domestic travel. All projections are industry estimates and are to be considered as guidance only and not audited forecasts. The figures are the expected base trend of sectors that already exist and are expanding, and where the 2030 Games would trigger a demand shock.*

#### **Theme 4: Unified Governance**

Theme 4 deals with the institutional structure that must be in place to have successful Games delivery. It is analytically distinct from Theme 2 in that it deals with the structure of the organisation and chain of command, and not the financial instruments with which spending is controlled. The four respondents tackle the governance question with varying positional views.

#### **The Delhi 2010 Anti-Model**

In all four interviews, Delhi 2010 acts as a negative example, against which the approach of Ahmedabad is defined. The disjointed chain of command that generated coordination problems across venues, the athletes' village and external infrastructure generated a reputational crisis that has limited India's hosting credibility for over ten years.

*"Delhi did not have centralised oversight — there was a fragmented command structure. Ahmedabad should establish a unified organising committee, given full autonomy, but also with direct accountability, because delay is the enemy." (Bakeri, 2025)*

This prescription reflects the Olympic Delivery Authority model (Girginov, 2013), according to which a purpose-built body with a statutory authority replaces the normal planning and procurement processes and has been widely credited with the on-time delivery of the Olympic Games 2012. Bakeri also criticizes jugaad, the Indian culture of problem-solving with last-minute improvised solutions to problems, as

incompatible with international event delivery standards, implying a normative change in management approach towards being reactive to problems, rather than being disciplined in planning. Patel develops the argument of governance, suggesting an independent legacy authority with its sole role being to ensure that post-Games infrastructural uses are in line with the long-term economic planning of Gujarat - an institutional design that resembles the embedded legacy planning model proposed central to the success of Birmingham 2022 (McKenzie et al., 2024).

### **Dress Rehearsals and Operational Readiness**

Hosting two or three national or state-level events at every Games venue at least nine to twelve months before the Commonwealth Games is presented by Bakeri not just as logistical advice but as a governance test — a structured mechanism for surfacing operational failures, traffic modelling errors, and crowd management inadequacies in time for remediation.

*"The possession of the infrastructure and the venues has to be given at least nine to twelve months in advance so that dress rehearsals take place — actual events at every venue. At least two or three before the games, ideally. Otherwise what remains within the country will not stay within the country." (Bakeri, 2025)*

This is in line with the IOC Transfer of Knowledge programme, which states that venue testing events are one of the most effective risk mitigation tools that can be offered to host cities (IOC, 2021). Bakeri extends the argument of operation to AI-based traffic and crowd modelling fed using historical Games data, linking the governance theme to the technology aspect of Theme 3. Complementary recommendation by Zaveri, the planning committee should be staffed with global experts and run to standards of efficiency and independence to the private sector, as recommended by Patel.

### **Theme 5: The Coming-Out Moment**

Theme 5 brings together legacy planning, international destination branding, and the geopolitical significance of the Games as a moment of global self-presentation by an emerging economy. It is also the theme on which the most significant divergence between respondents emerges, with Shah's demand-side critique providing a counterweight to the more expansive legacy visions offered by Bakeri and Patel.

### **Framing India's Global Emergence**

Bakeri frames the Games within a narrative of national emergence in which the Olympic bid of 2036 functions as the fuller expression of a project that the 2030 Commonwealth Games begins:

*"Just like the 2008 Beijing Olympics was a coming-out party for the Chinese — announcing themselves to the world stage — for us also, in 2036, it will probably be a coming-out party. We are a five trillion dollar-plus economy, and we are using the games to invest for utility, not just for prestige." (Bakeri, 2025)*

The qualifying distinction - utility (as opposed to prestige) - is a conscious rhetorical separation with Delhi 2010. The use of mega-event as a tool of soft power and a national re-imaging exercise is recorded

in Cornelissen (2010) and Grix, Brannagan, and Houlihan (2015), and the case of China in 2008 is the paradigmatic case. The difference between prestige-seeking and utility-oriented hosting as outlined by Grix et al. (2015) goes directly into the divide that Bakeri sets up between Delhi 2010 and the ambitions that are stated with regard to Ahmedabad. Patel extends the soft power aspect of cultural-economy terms: insofar as the Games can showcase Gujarat textiles, crafts, music, food and heritage: so much the better, it will create a kind of memory that will last longer than the medal tally and turn visitors into long-term destination ambassadors - which is consistent with the argument put forward by Kavatzis (2004), that durable place branding is built around tangible urban transformation as opposed to marketing campaigns.

### **The Gold Coast and Birmingham Comparators**

Bakeri and Patel mention Gold Coast 2018 and Birmingham 2022 as positive comparators, but it is too early to read the evidence as they do. The Gold Coast's documented economic legacy is significant, with a contribution of gross state product of around AUD 2.5 billion over the nine years of the Gold Coast's hosting of the Games in Queensland (Queensland Government, 2018), although the GC2018 Visitor Study revealed that of the 591,000 visitors, only eight per cent were from overseas, while overall spending in the Gold Coast was five per cent less than the previous year during the Games period – a trend that mirrors Shah's supply-demand critique. This shows that the Gold Coast is more of an economic legacy case than an international reputation case; it was not the event that made this brand uplift, but rather the years of consistent investment and content. The achievements that Birmingham 2022 has documented (as both Jakar and Philippou (2025) and McKenzie et al. (2024) confirm) are mainly of a domestic nature – Birmingham's neighbourhood regeneration, Birmingham's property value rises and Birmingham's community sports access. They are real and relevant – but one that would be considered as a domestic-regeneration comparator and not an international-reputation comparator. Barcelona 1992 is the precedent for Bakeri's argument of leveraging off of UNESCO. According to data from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in 1990 Barcelona attracted around 1.7 million overnight visitors, while this figure had risen to 7.4 million in 2011 and 8.3 million in 2015; and in 1993, the city decided to institutionalise the brand momentum of the Games, creating Turisme de Barcelona. (IOC, 2020). Previously, we had described the mechanism as an orchestrated blend of morphology, culture and content continuity post the Games, and this is precisely what Bakeri prescribes for the UNESCO old city of Ahmedabad. With this evidence in mind Bakeri's recipe for the Walled City is borne out:

*"Right now, Ahmedabad is not very well known beyond Gujarat, beyond India — even after receiving the UNESCO World Heritage status. So we could leverage that. If we invest — even a thousand crores on the old city — and make it really nice for walking, for shopping, for cafes, we should do it." (Bakeri, 2025)*

The UNESCO designation provides Ahmedabad with a heritage resource base, which, with a targeted investment in the infrastructure of the walkability of the old city, in hospitality and infrastructure of the old city cultural experience, could provide more sustainable brand value than the leisure identity of the Gold Coast. This agrees with the place marketing literature that mega-events are place marketing instruments that can be used to reposition cities in the global tourism and investment market (Anholt, 2007; Kavatzis, 2004). The legacy of framing by Zaveri is more practical: positioning Ahmedabad as a

recurring host of large scale sports, entertainment and conventions after 2030 in that new venues and hospitality assets pay themselves off through year-round utilisation as opposed to a single event.

### **Sports Culture as Economic Philosophy**

The conceptually most ambitious claim in the dataset is that by generalising sport to an economic philosophy, Bakeri is able to argue that the Games represent a long-term investment in human capital that relates to national labour productivity:

*"Sports should be used not for the sake of sports, but as a commercial engine for long-term prosperity — economic prosperity and health prosperity. If you don't have a fit population, then our productivity will be so low." (Bakeri, 2025)*

This framing is a response to the old critique that the economic benefits of mega-events are focused during the pre-event and event phases and are extinguished soon afterwards (Preuss, 2004; Gratton and Preuss, 2008). The proposal by Bakeri to institutionalise the Games culture by introducing everyday-use practices around the Games venue already built transforms the critique into a design prescription: the legacy is extended not by building additional venues but by integrating everyday-use practices into the community around the already built Games venue.

### **Theme 6: Urban Equity**

Theme 6 emerges from the multi-respondent dataset with sufficient analytical weight to stand as a separate theme rather than a sub-component of Theme 5. The four-respondent panel — and particularly Shah's sustained focus on affordability — raises accessibility and affordability concerns to thematic status. Where Theme 5 addresses what Ahmedabad becomes on the global stage, Theme 6 addresses the distributional question of who in Ahmedabad benefits.

### **The Affordability Condition**

Shah's central contribution — to the theme and to the study as a whole — is the proposition that the economic multiplier generated by mega-event infrastructure investment is proportional to the prices charged for the outputs that investment creates. Infrastructure priced beyond the reach of most residents produces a multiplier effect restricted to a narrow segment of the population; infrastructure priced affordably produces a city-wide multiplier, because it extends the geographic range of economic activity accessible to workers across the income distribution.

*"Give people connectivity, affordable connectivity — immediately opens up opportunities for you. You can work at a distance which is far from here. So it is lots of economic opportunities that open up." (Shah, 2025)*

Her particular worry about the bullet train is that it risks being priced in a similar way to a flight ticket rather than as a real mass-transit upgrade, which would be illustrative of a trend in the development of Indian infrastructure whereby premium pricing of prestige projects captures most of the economic benefit of a narrow group of users and leaves the broader connectivity dividend unrealised. Her complementary

suggestion to enhance the local bus network to serve as a last-mile connector - currently not a priority in favour of metro and bullet train investment - is the finding in the distributional infrastructure economics literature that feeder and last-mile connectivity is typically the most highly-rewarded investment in urban transport systems (Kassens-Noor, 2012). The discovery that regeneration benefits are real but spatially concentrated and unevenly distributed, as documented by Jakar and Philippou (2025) and McKenzie et al. (2024), offers the scholarly equivalent of the affordability criticism of regeneration offered by Shah at the practitioner level.

### **Universal Design as a Public Good**

Bakeri approaches the inclusivity dimension of this theme from the infrastructure design side rather than the pricing side. His argument is that universal design standards — tactile paving, audio crossings, accessible transit infrastructure, AI-enabled signal adjustment for visually impaired pedestrians — must be embedded in Games venues from the outset and, once installed, will cascade into the city's general built environment:

*"We never plan for deaf and blind people in India. For the games, we will have to do that — especially if we are also planning these venues for Para Olympics and Para sports in the future. And if that design is brought into the games, it can also be extended to the other infrastructure of the city." (Bakeri, 2025)*

Universal design infrastructure has the character of a public good: once installed, its benefits accrue to all users across all future uses of the facility, consistent with the design-for-all paradigm (Imrie and Hall, 2001). Patel reinforces the framing from a community planning perspective: neighbourhood-level venues and affordable access to sports facilities are the necessary design conditions for the Games to generate the democratic sporting culture their social legacy promises — a finding consistent with McKenzie et al.'s (2024) observation that community-centric planning was central to Birmingham 2022's ability to distribute regeneration benefits across a wider urban population. Zaveri's contribution is more general: improved infrastructure and skill development benefit the whole community. This functions as a baseline position, with Shah's affordability critique and Bakeri's universal design argument providing the more targeted distributional interventions that build on it.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study examined the expected economic impact of the 2030 Commonwealth Games on Ahmedabad through a qualitative multi-respondent design, drawing on four semi-structured expert interviews and a systematic review of the comparative mega-event literature. Six themes were identified: The Deadline Catalyst, Financial Discipline, The Holistic Sports Economy, Unified Governance, The Coming-Out Moment, and — emerging distinctively from the multi-respondent dataset — Urban Equity. Their relationship to the three research questions is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Research Questions and Summary Responses

RQ	Question	Summary Response
RQ1	What is the current state of mega-event economic planning in Ahmedabad for the 2030 Commonwealth Games?	Ahmedabad’s planning has moved decisively from the prestige-driven model of Delhi 2010 toward a utility-driven, deadline-catalysed model that embeds Games infrastructure within pre-existing national connectivity priorities. All four respondents converge on this diagnosis, treating the Games primarily as an investment programme rather than a sporting event.
RQ2	What specific economic, infrastructural, and social impacts are anticipated across urban infrastructure, tourism, employment, technology, and social inclusion?	Six impact areas were identified: multi-decadal infrastructure multipliers; a holistic sports economy extending beyond the coaching paradigm; unified governance enabling on-time delivery; tourism re-branding and soft power projection; legacy sustainability and India’s coming-out moment; and — newly emergent in the multi-respondent data — affordability and urban equity as the cross-cutting condition for the economic multiplier to operate at community scale.
RQ3	What are the key implementation challenges and governance constraints limiting the realisation of long-term economic legacy?	The main structural constraints found include optimism bias in financial forecasting, procurement corruption, a fragmented system of governance, supplydemand mismatch in tourism projections and economic leakage in foreign contracting. Prescriptions Structural An organising committee should exist, which is open and digital and is overseen by an independent international custodian, AI-assisted traffic and crowd modelling, independently audited revenue forecasting, and an affordability test applied to all post-Games infrastructure.

**Comparative Evidence: Measures Adopted and Absent**

However, since this study is prospective – an event in the future – the case for or against each interviewee does not need to be based on Ahmedabad's own results. What the comparative literature can provide, though, is evidence of cases in which the measures that Bakeri, Patel and Zaveri propose were actually adopted, and cases where they were not. This evidence was summarized for the six themes of the findings in Table 5. It is not presented as a causal test, but as the best possible triangulation of the prescriptions and outcomes in other places – ‘our interviewees believe this will work’ to ‘this has worked in comparable places, and it failed where it was not present.’

Table 5: Comparative Evidence — Measures Adopted Against Measures Absent

June 2026

Vol 8. No 2.

Theme	Measure	Expert(s)	Adopted — case and outcome	Absent — case and failure
T1: Deadline Catalyst	Embed Games in pre-existing plan; use existing infrastructure over new builds	Bakeri, Patel, Zaveri	Manchester 2002: event-themed model accelerated pre-planned East Manchester (Smith and Fox, 2007); LA 1984: surplus via existing-infrastructure reliance (Baade and Matheson, 2016)	Athens 2004 and Rio 2016: heavy new-build programmes produced abandoned venues and long-term debt (Baade and Matheson, 2016; Zimbalist, 2015)
T2: Financial Discipline	Open electronic procurement; sealed bids; independent external audit	Bakeri	London 2012: CompeteFor portal; ODA construction ~£1B under budget; ~70% contracts to SMEs; model promoted internationally (UK DCMS, 2012)	Delhi 2010: CVC (2011) found rigged tenders, 30–100% cost gaps; CAG (2011): 16× overrun (USD 270M → USD 4.1B)
T3: Holistic Sports Economy	Integrated sports science, medicine, nutrition and analytics ecosystem	Bakeri, Patel	Australia (post-1976): AIS integrates sports science, nutrition, biomechanics and analytics; global benchmark for multi-pillar support system (De Bosscher et al., 2008)	India pre-2010: narrow coaching-only investment; structurally weak on De Bosscher et al.'s pillars 6 and 9; Delhi 2010 produced no sports-ecosystem legacy

T4: Unified Governance	Single statutory delivery body; pre-Games test events; independent legacy authority	Bakeri, Patel, Zaveri	London 2012 ODA: statutory delivery, ~£1B under budget (Girginov, 2013); Birmingham 2022: embedded legacy planning distributed regeneration benefits (McKenzie et al., 2024)	Delhi 2010: fragmented command across MCD, DDA, NDMC, CPWD, SAI produced coordination crisis weeks before opening (Kassens-Noor and Kayal, 2016)
T5: Coming-Out Moment	Physical transformation of cultural heritage as international destination brand	Bakeri, Patel	Barcelona 1992: overnight visitors rose from ~1.7M (1990) to 7.4M (2011) and 8.3M (2015); Turisme de Barcelona established 1993 (IOC, 2020)	Delhi 2010: reputational damage (Majumdar, 2011); Gold Coast 2018: only 8% overseas visitors; Games-period spending down 5% YoY (Queensland Government, 2018)
T6: Urban Equity	Universal design; affordable community infrastructure; last-mile connectivity	Shah, Bakeri, Patel	Birmingham 2022: Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard (BIG Standard); first integration of Para sport in CWG programme; KPMG evaluation confirmed 'Games for Everyone' vision delivered (KPMG, 2024)	Rio 2016: 77,000+ residents displaced, relocated to periphery with 2-hr commutes (Faulhaber and Azevedo, 2015); Delhi 2010: slum clearances (Majumdar, 2011)

*Note: The trend is the same for all six themes: actions proposed by interviewees can be found in literature, positive outcomes are found where the actions have been taken, and failure outcomes are concentrated around the lack of actions. The London 2012 CompeteFor portal is based on the transparency and competition aspects of Bakeri's proposal, while the independent international custodian is Bakeri's proposed refinement for which there is no Games precedent..*

The six themes cut across three broad observations.

### **From Prestige to Utility**

The planning of Ahmedabad is an institutional development, that is, no longer the Delhi 2010 model. Whereas in Delhi the logic behind prestige-driven expenditure, fragmented command, and reactive governance features characterised the city, in Ahmedabad, the planning is based on a utility-investment logic where the Games induce the already existing priorities in urban development that are consistent with the Gati Shakti National Master Plan. The extensions of the metro corridors, the athletes' village transformed into student housing, and the peripheral master planning around Godavi all represent an infrastructure strategy that is geared towards the long-term utility of the infrastructure at the very beginning. This is in line with the observation by Cornelissen (2010) and Grix, Brannagan, and Houlihan (2015): that emerging powers are increasingly viewing objectives of soft power and infrastructure legacy as complementary (rather than conflicting) rationales. The Olympic Games 2030 are both an end in themselves and a testing ground for a bigger goal: by planning to Olympic-scaled specifications at the outset, the Olympic Games 2030 can be seen as a proving ground for a bigger ambition.

This finding is greatly reinforced by the multi-respondent design. Meanwhile, although based on different professional vantage points, Bakeri (offers the most detailed evidence at the planning level), Patel (friction-reduction frame), Zaveri (PPP-discipline logic), and Shah (independent journalistic perspective) all point to the same underlying shift in the logic of hosting. This convergence between the realms of various stakeholders is the most forceful argument the study can make: the utility-over-prestige reorientation is not a single story that one respondent with a convenient position tells but a common institution-wide premise in the planning, industry, finance and media domains.

### **Ecosystem, Governance, and the Post-Delhi Reform Agenda**

The Holistic Sports Economy builds upon the literature on the employment legacy by identifying a certain institutional gap, the narrow focus of the Indian coaching paradigm on physical facilities and provision of coaches, and proposes a Games-based response that builds upon the pharmaceutical, life sciences and IIT research base in Gujarat. This is in line with the nine pillars of the model introduced by De Bosscher et al. (2008): the pillars that India is structurally weak in (athlete support services, research infrastructure, and ecosystem development) are in fact the ones that the Games could catalyse, with the pillars that India is relatively strong in (physical facilities, coach provision) being augmented rather than created out of thin air. The argument about the employment dimension by Patel in his article on skills that travel and Zaveri in his article on Make in India alignment supports the argument on the employment dimension, but Shah in his article on the problem of Skills that Travel warns that the effects of this dimension of the economy do not last long unless there is deliberate transfer to the mainstream economy.

The governance findings align closely with the post-Delhi 2010 reform agenda identified in the literature. Bakeri's structurally designed anti-corruption procurement — electronically submitted bids opened by an independent international custodian — is grounded in mechanism design principles (Myerson, 1979) and is a more specific instrument than the exhortatory frameworks of most procurement reform documents. The Delhi 2010 fragmentation failure, referenced independently by all four respondents, is addressed by the recommendation for a single organising committee modelled on the London 2012 Olympic Delivery Authority (Girginov, 2013). Patel's proposal for an independent legacy authority extends the governance

June 2026

Vol 8, No 2.

logic beyond the event period into post-Games infrastructure management — a design that resembles the embedded legacy planning model identified as central to Birmingham 2022 (McKenzie et al., 2024). Lang, Gogishvili, and Müller's (2025) finding that competitive procurement is among the strongest predictors of mega-event profitability across sixty-three events provides the empirical backing for the reform package as a whole.

### **The Distributional Question**

The sixth theme is Urban Equity, which introduces an element of distribution into the literature on mega-event economics, which otherwise tends to prioritize distributional aspects as secondary. Shah's demand-side critique of tourism projections and her affordability imperative, taken together with the findings by Jakar and Philippou (2025) and McKenzie et al. (2024) that regeneration benefits are real but spatially and socially concentrated, establish that the structural conditions for broad-based economic benefit must be designed into infrastructure from the outset rather than assumed to follow automatically from investment at scale. Bakeri's universal design argument operates on the same principle from the accessibility side: once embedded in Games venues, inclusive design standards cascade into the city's general built environment as a public good (Imrie and Hall, 2001). Taken together, the two arguments frame the affordability condition and the inclusive design condition as the twin tests of whether the Games multiplier reaches community scale. This is the study's most distinctive analytical contribution, and it is one that a single-interview design would be unlikely to surface.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present paper aimed to explore the expected economic effect of the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad using a qualitative multi-respondent design. Based on four expert interviews and a systematic review of comparable mega-events literature, it is found that these six themes – The Deadline Catalyst, Financial Discipline, The Holistic Sports Economy, Unified Governance, The Coming-Out Moment and Urban Equity – collectively depict a planning environment which includes utility-driven infrastructure delivery, a structural governance change in response to the failure modes of Delhi 2010, and a test of distributional transfers, that is, whether the economic multiplier reaches residents of all income groups. The new comparative evidence assembled in this revision is used to strengthen the analytical foundation of each theme: the CompeteFor portal set up for London 2012 validates Bakeri's procurement prescription (Theme 2); the empirical path of the transformation of visitors' overnight numbers in Barcelona 1992 validates Bakeri's coming-out moment argument (Theme 5); and the Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard developed by Birmingham 2022 validates Bakeri's universal-design cascade recommendation (Theme 6). The trend is the same in all six themes and the cross-case comparison in Table 5: the measures that the interviewees suggest exist in the literature in places in which they were taken; the failure cases cluster around the absence of such measures. Perhaps most unique is the emergent sixth theme of Urban Equity, which asks the economic multiplier question at the community level as well, contingent upon affordable pricing and inclusive, from the ground up, design of the infrastructure.

## **Practical Implications**

There are seven practical implications that follow. First, infrastructure must be set up in a manner where the infrastructure is useful on a long-term basis, initially calibrated to international standards of multi-sport events. Second, there must be a single coordinating body that has statutory powers and is answerable directly. Third, there should be an open digital process with electronically sealed bids, to be opened by an independent international custodian. Fourth, holistic sports-ecosystem investment, sports medicine, biosensors, nutritional science, and performance analytics should be regarded as a strategic priority, as opposed to a by-product that should occur in the event-specific context. Fifth, it must be designed in such a way that all urban infrastructure that is constructed during the preparation period is covered by the university's accessible design standards, not just within Games venues. Sixth, the projections of revenues are supposed to be audited independently with the help of the tools that have been adjusted to the previous Games data. Seventh, infrastructure must be priced in such a way that it is affordable to all income groups, and last-mile connectivity and access to infrastructure at the community level should be viewed as planning preconditions, rather than optional add-ons to prestige investment.

## **Limitations**

There are four limitations of the findings. First, the views of government officials, civil society organisations, affected communities, and athletes are not reflected in the primary data and they might not agree with those of the four respondents in this case. Second, the prospective nature of the topic means that the key variables such as the final budgets, attendance figures and the rates of utilisation of the post-Games venue can not yet be observed, which places the study in the domain of anticipatory instead of evaluative analysis. Third, the positionality risks that are specific to individual respondents (Commercial exposure of Bakeri, Industry status of Patel, journalistic framing by Shah, and capital-deployment lens by Zaveri) can be addressed only to some degree through reflexive coding. Fourth, the economics of South Asian mega-events have not been researched as extensively as those of Western and East Asian hosts, which limits the number of cases that can be directly compared.

## **Directions for Future Research**

Several lines of research could extend the contribution of the current study. Expanding the primary dataset to include government planners, civil society representatives, and affected communities would address the most significant gap in the present design. A longitudinal ex post impact evaluation two to three years after the 2030 Games would move the analysis from anticipatory to evaluative. Quantitative assessment of the economic multiplier effects of specific infrastructure investments, realistic maintenance cost modelling over a twenty-five-year horizon, and a dedicated assessment of the sports technology startup ecosystem that could be incubated around Gujarat's pharmaceutical and life sciences sector would each address gaps that a qualitative design cannot fill. The most substantial contribution to the wider literature would come from a comparative Global South study of sequential mega-event hosting strategies in other Asian and African candidate cities, for which the Ahmedabad case establishes the first detailed empirical reference point.

## **Closing Statement**

June 2026

Vol 8, No 2.

Barcelona 1992, Manchester 2002, and London 2012 are the cities that have managed to turn the hosting of mega events into multi-decade urban development by using the Games as a kind of institutional test: Can a city design, procure, deliver, and govern an infrastructure at the international level, and then make that infrastructure truly available to its citizens in the decades that follow? The comparative evidence compiled here – from London's CompeteFor portal and the sixteen-fold divergence between the CAG-documented overrun of Delhi 2010 and the Ahmedabad interviewees' prescription, to Barcelona's visitor trajectory and its difference with Gold Coast's eight per cent overseas attendance, to Birmingham 2022's inclusive design standard and its difference with Rio 2016's 77,000 displaced residents – confirms that the prescriptions the interviewees from Ahmedabad offer have institutional underpinnings. The question is whether Ahmedabad meets this challenge or not, and not because of the size of the infrastructure they commission but because of the quality of institutions they create for delivering, governing and distributing the infrastructure equitably, decade after decade, to the people of all income groups.

## REFERENCES

- Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive identity: The new brand management for nations, cities and regions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baade, R. A., and Matheson, V. A. (2016). Going for the gold: The economics of the Olympics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(2), 201–218. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.2.201>
- Bakeri, P. (2025, February). *Economic impact of the 2030 Commonwealth Games and 2036 Olympics on Ahmedabad* [Semi-structured expert interview]. Conducted by the researcher via video call.
- Bogner, A., Littig, B., and Menz, W. (Eds.). (2009). *Interviewing experts*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Commonwealth Sport. (2025, November 26). *Amdavad, India confirmed as host of the 2030 Centenary Games*. <https://www.commonwealthsport.com/news/4408937/commonwealth-sport-confirms-amdavad-india-as-host-of-the-2030-centenary-games>
- Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). (2011). *Report on Commonwealth Games 2010*. Government of India.
- Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). (2011). *Performance audit of XIX Commonwealth Games 2010*. Report No. 6 of 2011–12. Government of India.
- Deloitte India and Google. (2024). *Think Sports: Unlocking India's USD 130 billion sports potential*. Deloitte India. <https://www.deloitte.com/in/en/about/press-room/indias-sports-market-set-to-soar-to-reach-130-bn-by-2030-deloitte-n-google.html>

- Cornelissen, S. (2010). The geopolitics of global aspiration: Sport, soft power and emerging powers. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27(16–18), 3008–3025. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2010.508287>
- De Bosscher, V., Bingham, J., Shibli, S., van Bottenburg, M., and De Knop, P. (2008). *The global sporting arms race: An international comparative study on sports policy factors leading to international sporting success*. Meyer and Meyer Sport.
- Faulhaber, L., and Azevedo, L. (2015). SMH 2016: Remoções no Rio de Janeiro olímpico. In Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2016). *Global report on internal displacement 2016*. IDMC. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2016/>
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2014). What you should know about megaprojects and why: An overview. *Project Management Journal*, 45(2), 6–19. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pmj.21409>
- Flyvbjerg, B., Bruzelius, N., and Rothengatter, W. (2003). *Megaprojects and risk: An anatomy of ambition*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107050891>
- Girginov, V. (Ed.). (2013). *Handbook of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Volume 1: Making the Games*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203075531>
- Gold, J. R., and Gold, M. M. (Eds.). (2016). *Olympic cities: City agendas, planning, and the world's games, 1896–2020* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315756233>
- Gratton, C., and Preuss, H. (2008). Maximizing Olympic impacts by building up legacies. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25(14), 1922–1938. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360802439023>
- Grix, J., Brannagan, P. M., and Houlihan, B. (2015). Interrogating states' soft power strategies: A case study of sports mega-events in Brazil and the UK. *Global Society*, 29(3), 463–479. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2015.1047743>
- Imrie, R., and Hall, P. (2001). *Inclusive design: Designing and developing accessible environments*. Spon Press.
- International Olympic Committee. (2021). *Olympic Games guide on legacy*. IOC.
- Jakar, G., and Philippou, C. (2025). Legacy and urban regeneration: Long-term local impact of the London 2012 Olympic Games. *European Planning Studies*, 33(2), 183–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2024.2422888>
- International Olympic Committee. (2020). *Barcelona 1992: Olympic legacy*. IOC. <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/barcelona-1992>
- KPMG. (2024). *Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: Independent evaluation report*. KPMG / West Midlands Combined Authority.

- Kassens-Noor, E. (2012). *Planning Olympic legacies: Transport dreams and urban realities*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415689717>
- Kassens-Noor, E., and Kayal, P. (2016). India's new globalization strategy and its consequences for urban development: The impact of the 2010 Commonwealth Games on Delhi's transport system. *International Planning Studies*, 21(1), 34–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2015.1114448>
- Kavaratzis, M. (2004). From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding*, 1(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.pb.5990005>
- Kobierecki, M. M., and Pierzgalski, M. (2022). Sports mega-events and economic growth: A synthetic control approach. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 23(4), 418–446. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15270025211071029>
- Kudtarkar, S. G. (2020). Resetting PPP in infrastructure model in India post-COVID-19 pandemic. *The Indian Economic Journal*, 68(3), 365–382. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019466220976678>
- Lang, T., Gogishvili, D., and Müller, M. (2025). What makes mega-events profitable? Determinants of revenues and costs of the Olympic Games and the Football World Cup. *Sport Management Review*.
- Leopkey, B., and Parent, M. M. (2012). Olympic Games legacy: From general benefits to sustainable long-term legacy. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29(6), 924–943. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2011.623006>
- Majumdar, B. (2011). Commonwealth Games 2010: The index of a “new” India? *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 78(1), 231–254. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2011.0032>
- Majumdar, B. (2012). The ‘accidental legacy’ of Commonwealth Games 2010. *South Asian History and Culture*, 3(1), 126–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2012.639526>
- Majumdar, B., and Mehta, N. (2010). *Sellotape legacy: Delhi and the Commonwealth Games*. HarperCollins India.
- McKenzie, J. A., Ludvigsen, J. A. L., Scott-Bell, A., and Hayton, J. W. (2024). The framed and contested meanings of sport mega-event ‘legacies’: A case study of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 59(8), 1167–1188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902241246145>
- Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. (2021). *PM GatiShakti National Master Plan*. Government of India. <https://pmgatishakti.gov.in>

- Müller, M. (2015). The mega-event syndrome: Why so much goes wrong in mega-event planning and what to do about it. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 81(1), 6–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2015.1038292>
- Myerson, R. B. (1979). Incentive compatibility and the bargaining problem. *Econometrica*, 47(1), 61–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1912346>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Porter, M. E. (1990). *The competitive advantage of nations*. Free Press.
- Preuss, H. (2004). *The economics of staging the Olympics: A comparison of the Games 1972–2008*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- PwC India. (2019). *Sports infrastructure: Transforming the Indian sports ecosystem*. PricewaterhouseCoopers India. <https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/industries/entertainment-and-media/sports-infrastructure.pdf>
- Smith, A., and Fox, T. (2007). From ‘event-led’ to ‘event-themed’ regeneration: The 2002 Commonwealth Games legacy programme. *Urban Studies*, 44(5–6), 1125–1144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980701256150>
- Queensland Government — Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination. (2018). *GC2018 Visitor Study: Final report*. Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, Queensland.
- UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport. (2012). *London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: Post-Games report*. DCMS.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Zimbalist, A. (2015). *Circus maximus: The economic gamble behind hosting the Olympics and the World Cup*. Brookings Institution Press.