

An Assessment of the Host Population's Perceptions of the 2009 Summer Deaflympics in Taipei

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**Session 7: Other
Presentation (25-minute)**

Thursday, May 31, 2007

1:30 PM - 1:55 PM

In recent years, major sporting events have received increasing attention as the vehicles for facilitating urban regeneration, generating economic growth and so on (Chalkley & Essex, 1999; French & Disher, 1997; Lee & Taylor, 2005). Major sporting events appeal to city government, civic leaders, and other stakeholders because of the significant benefits accrued by hosting these events, including chances to advertise products to a global audience, to leverage business opportunities, to accumulate event management knowledge, to enhance the tourist industry, and to boost citizen morale and pride (Barney, Wenn, & Martyn, 2002; Lee & Taylor, 2005). Undoubtedly, these benefits become the factors that spur fierce competition between some developing and developed cities in terms of bidding for major sporting events

In fact, Taiwan government has been aggressively seeking the opportunity to host a large-scale international sporting event to enhance her image and media exposure. However, Taiwan failed in bidding for many major sporting events, such as Universidad, Asian Games, and East Asian Games due to some political issues in international community. Under such circumstances, Taipei city government supported Chinese Taipei Sport Association for the Deaf to bid for the 21st Summer Deaflympics in 2009 as alternative. However, Deaflympic, unlike those hallmark events (i.e. Olympic or FIFA World Cup), is difficult to solicit sponsorship. Therefore, right after Taipei won the bid of 2009 Summer Deaflympic in 2003, organizing committee has been working on proving to the public that hosting Deaflympic can actually bring in positive benefits (i.e. image, and economic impact) to the city to secure financial resources from public sectors and community.

Although some studies indicate that major sporting events can bring several benefits to the host city. For example, French and Disher (1997) classified four types of benefits resulted from large-scale sporting events, including the legacy of sports facilities and amenities, the short-term economic stimulus, highly visible marketing opportunity, and significant urban redevelopment. Among these benefits, economic impact analysis is still the main methodology when researchers trying to evaluate the effectiveness of major sporting events. However, questions have been raised about the validity of economic impact assessment, because many post-game analyses showed that economic benefits fell below the initial predictions without considering host city population's perception and other related benefits associated with sporting events.

Consequently, many scholars have begun to assess the event on other bases, such as urban redevelopment, citizen's perception, and so on. For instances, Ritchis's (1984) Olympic research model indicated the potential benefits and negative consequence of hosting Games. The six benefits included the following: (a) international recognition, (b) increased future tourism, (c) economic benefits, (d) Olympic facilities development, (e) enhanced image or reputation, and (f) increased citizen pride. In addition, the nine negative consequences were the following: (a) traffic congestion, (b) price gouging, (c) strain on law enforcement, (d) street crime, (e) unfair distribution of resources, (f) civil unrest, (g) terrorism, (h) negative attitude of visitors toward residents, and (i) negative attitude of residents toward visitor. Following Ritchis's model, Mihalik and Simonetta (1999) conducted a study assessing Georgians' perception of 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Since little economic impact study in Taiwan conducting from host population's perspective, therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the host population's perceptions of the 2009 Taipei Summer Deaflympics. Accordingly, the current study will follow the work of Mihalik and Simonetta (1999) with a revision of these potential benefits and negative consequences of hosting sporting events based on the interviews with city government official, organizing committee members, and panel experts. Then, questionnaire will be used to investigate Taipei population's perception of the 2009 Summer Deaflympics with information including, intention to attend any game, level of support towards the 2009 Summer Deaflympics, and attitude towards deaf community. Since Taiwan will continually bid for other major sporting events, understating citizen's thoughts and granting their support will be a key factor in terms of hosting a successful event. Results of current study are expected to assist event organizer to understand people's perceptions of these large-scale sporting events, as well as a better preparation for bidding and hosting events in the future.