Introduction

Recently, researchers have begun to focus on the legacies that mega-events such as the Olympic Games leave on a host city (Preuss, 2007). Specifically, researchers want to gain a better understanding of how to measure legacies and plan accordingly in order to maximize positive and minimize negative legacies. The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the perceptions of host and non-host residents of the Olympic Games with regards to the importance of legacies six months prior to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games. The research questions of this study were: (i) what are the dominant legacy themes among residents of host and non-host areas; and, (ii) which characteristics are important to host and non-host residents of the Olympic Games as it pertains to their quality of life?

Literature Review

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has become concerned with legacies for three reasons: First, a positive legacy prevents criticism of the IOC from host cities and instead offers support suggesting that hosting the event was beneficial. Second, a positive legacy validates the use of public resources for developing Olympic related infrastructure. Third, a positive legacy stimulates interest of future host cities to bid for the Olympic Games ensuring their continuation (Gratton & Preuss, 2008; Mangan, 2008). The concept of 'Legacy' first appeared in the 1990’s during the planning of the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games (Chappelet, 2008). Organizers of the Atlanta Games felt it was necessary to identify and showcase what the Olympic Games would leave behind for Atlanta (Chappelet, 2008). Looking over the literature, there is no clear definition of what ‘Legacy’ means in a sports context (Preuss, 2007). ‘Event Legacy’ as used by the IOC, refers to the importance of sport facilities and community development turned over to the public or sports organizations after the Olympic Games (Gratton & Preuss, 2008). Studies conducted by Cashman (2005), Gratton & Preuss (2008), and Preuss (2007) collected and classified legacies under themes such as Sport, Economic, Infrastructure, Socio-Cultural, Memory and History, Symbols, Public Life, Urban, Information and Education. Preuss (2007) classified ‘event structures’ as ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ structures that create change in the host city, and based on these changes an event legacy occurs. Furthermore, there has been little research to determine non-host perceptions of any spillover effects associated with hosting the Olympic Games (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). The present study contributes to the present mega-event legacy literature as it examines host and non-host resident perceptions of legacies before the event occurs; as well as the importance of legacy aspects as it relates to quality of life for host and non-host residents.

Method and data analysis

The sample included residents living in Vancouver, British Columbia and Ottawa, Ontario. Data was collected using a telephone survey. A phone list using the latest phone book from Vancouver, BC and Ottawa, ON was used. The researcher randomly selected 1330 telephone numbers from Vancouver and 300 from Ottawa. A total of 762 individuals were contacted between the beginning of July 2009 and mid October 2009 and asked to participate in the study. A total of 102 residents agreed to participate, 48 from Vancouver and 54 from Ottawa, yielding a 13.3 % response rate. The telephone survey consisted of questions related to ratings of importance of various legacy aspects, demographics and an open ended question that asked residents to provide the three words that come to mind when they think of the term legacies. To measure legacy themes qualitatively, the measurement paradigm utilized by Echtner & Ritchie (1993) was adapted, asking respondents to indicate three words that come to mind when they think of the term Legacy of the 2010 Olympic Games. The 306 words generated were then classified into eight themes (outlined in results) which were confirmed by a faculty member with expertise in sport tourism and two PhD students in sport management and tourism for face and content validity. The SPSS 17.0 software was used to analyze responses and count the words associated with each of the Legacy themes. A question was also asked to
identify which characteristics are the most important to residents as it pertains to their overall quality of life. There were a total of 27 characteristics based on the research of Preuss & Solberg (2006) that were measured for importance using a five point Likert-scale where 1= not important and 5= extremely important.

Results

Based on the expert comments, the following legacy themes for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games were identified: Event Prestige/Reputation, Economic, Sport, Emotional, Organizational, Environmental, Socio-Cultural, and Tourism. The frequency analysis of the Legacy themes revealed that from the 306 words collected from all the respondents, Vancouver residents (nword=144) most focused on Economic (n=27) and Organizational (n=25) Legacies of the Olympics. Socio-Cultural (n=21), Event Prestige/Reputation (n=16), Emotional (n=16), Sport (n=11), Tourism (n=6), and Environmental (n=5) followed the first two dominant themes. As for the Ottawa sample (nword=162), the two dominant themes were Event Prestige/Reputation (n=46), and Emotional (n=31) followed by Socio-Cultural (n=21), Sport (n=18), Organizational (n=18), Tourism (n=10), Economic (n=7) and Environmental (n=2). Looking at what legacy aspects are important for host and non-host residents as it relates to their quality of life, both Vancouver (M=4.1) and Ottawa (M=4.22) residents indicated that the avoidance of pollution was most important. Both Vancouver (M=2.65) and Ottawa (M=2.52) residents felt that the least important characteristic was the acquirement of skills and knowledge through volunteering for the Olympics.

Discussion and conclusion

This study found that host residents tend to think of the ‘Hard’ structures such as the Economic and Organizational Legacies associated with the Olympic Games, whereas non-host residents think of the ‘Soft’ structures such as Event Prestige/Reputation and Emotional Legacies related to the Olympic Games. Furthermore, both host and non-host residents indicated that avoiding pollution and minimizing environmental damage are the most important characteristics as it pertains to their quality of life. These results differ from a previous study that suggested residents did not consider the importance of environmental damage (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002) and suggest that both host and non-host residents are becoming more aware and concerned of the environmental impacts associated with hosting the Olympic Games.

References


