 Legacy Perceptions among Host and Non-Host Olympic Games Residents: A Longitudinal Study of the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games

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Hosting the Olympic Games can lead a city to engage in significant public expenditure, to build facilities and infrastructure, provide urban rejuvenation, and revival projects which can leave favorable or unfavorable legacies for residents (Horne, 2007). Understanding the impact of legacies overtime in order to plan the maximization of positive outcomes and minimization of the negative legacies (Preuss, 2007) from the event organization is therefore important. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a change in perceptions of the importance and performance of legacies for the host and non-host residents of the Olympic Games as it relates to their quality of life pre-, during, and post-the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games. Understanding the perceptions of host and non-host residents’ overtime utilizing longitudinal data can inform event management practices about planning and delivering legacy management programs.

Legacy has been defined as “planned and unplanned, positive and negative, intangible and tangible structures created through a sport event that remain after the event” (Gratton & Preuss, 2008, p. 1924). The use of social exchange theory in the context of the Olympic Games suggests that residents attitudes towards the importance and performance of legacies can be explained by the exchange of benefits (i.e., quality of life) residents will receive from hosting the event (Waitt, 2003). It is important to note that the exchange theory is not stagnant; over time residents reassess the exchange operation (Waitt, 2003) which involves not only an assessment of immediate perceived benefits and costs, but also of longer term benefits and costs. Based on this theory, residents’ attitudes as to what legacies are important for their quality of life and if they perform to meet expectations may change from the pre-, during, and post-time periods. The pre-event perceptions will be the “reference point” for during and post-event evaluation as suggested by the Prospect Theory’s value function (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Importance and performance perceptions below the reference point during and post-event will result in a negative evaluation, while those above will be seen as gains (Kim, Gursoy, & Lee, 2006). Given the national nature associated with the hosting of mega events, lack of research is also evident in determining non-host perceptions of any spillover effects associated with hosting the Olympic Games (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). By gaining an understanding of what legacies are important and how they perform, event organizers, the host nation and the International Olympic Committee can focus resources into improving legacy programs that residents feel are important for their quality of life at a national and a local level.

In order to examine host and non-host resident perceptions of the importance and performance of legacies as it relates to their quality of life the sample included residents living in Vancouver, British Columbia and Ottawa, Ontario. Data were 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 respondents agreed to participate, 48 from Vancouver and 54 from Ottawa. The second phase took place during the Olympic Games in February 2010. Individuals who agreed to participate in the first phase were contacted. Forty two (n = 42) from Vancouver and 48 respondents from Ottawa responded to the survey. The third phase occurred six months after the Olympic Games. Participants were contacted from August 2010 until the end of September 2010. Forty one (n = 41) respondents agreed to continue from Vancouver and 43 from Ottawa for a final number of 84 participants. The telephone survey consisted of questions related to rating the importance and performance of various legacy aspects and demographics. Respondents were asked to identify which characteristics are most important to residents and how did they perform as it pertains to their overall quality of life. There were a total of 27 characteristics that were measured on a five point Likert-scale for importance and performance as it relates to legacy aspects and resident quality of life based on Preuss & Solberg (2006) and Andereck and Vogt, (2000). Importance questions were rated by 1= not important and 5= extremely important. Performance questions were rated by 1=does not meet my expectations at all and 5=exceeded expectations Reliability results (alpha coefficient) were acceptable: Economic (α=.831), Tourism (α=.897), Environment (α=.921), Socio-cultural (α=.819), Psychological (α=.708), and Political (α=.774). An interaction term of important and performance items was created for each of the legacy categories. The range of the interaction term responses was from 1 to 25. Paired sample t-tests and descriptive statistics were estimated.

Looking at the importance/performance interaction term, Vancouver residents indicated that tourism aspects scored the highest pre-Olympics (Mpre=10.5) and exceeded and met expectations during (Mduring=11) and post-event (Mpost=10.9), while Ottawa residents indicated that Psychological aspects were the highest pre-event (Mpre=10.8). During the Olympics and post-Olympics, both Vancouver (Mduring=11.4, Mpost=11.4) and Ottawa (Mduring=11.8, Mpost=12.2) residents indicated that the Psychological aspects were the most important and met expectations. For Vancouver residents the importance and performance...
for Psychological aspects remained the same, but increased for Ottawa residents indicating expectations were exceeded, during and post-Olympics. The paired sample t-tests indicated that there was a significant change for Vancouver residents dealing with Social-cultural aspects pre-(Mpre=9.5) and during (Mduring=11.3) the Olympic Games and pre-(Mpre=9.5) and post-(Mpost=11.3) Olympic Games. For Ottawa residents a significant change was found pre-(Mpre=10.6) and post-(Mpost=11.4) Olympic Games for Socio-cultural aspects. There was also a significant change dealing with Psychological aspects pre- and during the Olympic Games for both the Vancouver (Mpre=10.1, Mduring=11.4) and Ottawa (Mpre=10.8, Mduring=11.8) residents. For economic, political, environmental and tourism there were no changes before, during and after in the perception and evaluation of legacy programs.

As social exchange theory suggests, pre-event scores serve as a reference point for evaluation during and post-event. Vancouver residents evaluated that the performance of the tourism legacies exceeded expectations set at the pre-event time frame during the Olympics, but no change occurred post-event. Ottawa residents indicated that the psychological legacies were the most important and performed the best and as social exchange theory suggests, the psychological expectations set at the pre-event stage were exceeded during and post-event. During and post-Olympics all residents indicated that the psychological legacies were the most important and performed the best. The positive psychological change over the three time periods can be attributed to the fact that Canada was hosting the Olympics in their native land, and it was the first winter Olympics in which a Canadian won a gold on home soil and won the gold medal in men's hockey.