Relationships between General Public's Perceptions on Social Impacts and Behavioral Intentions toward Publicly Funded Multipurpose Sport Facility

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Over the years, there was a boom in construction of new sport-related facilities, such as arenas and stadiums, in the United States (Bergsgard & Norberg, 2010). The construction of new multipurpose sport facilities has flourished constantly from regional recreation facilities to college and professional facilities for hosting various events (e.g., sporting events, entertainment events, and community events) in order to generate benefits to the local and non-local residents (Dehring, Depken, & Ward, 2007). In fact, many multipurpose sport facilities built in the U.S. have utilized public subsidies since municipalities declared that it would bring both tangible and intangible benefits (i.e., income generation, increasing job opportunities, enhancing image of the community, etc.) to their communities (Baade & Matheson, 2011). However, most of the communities that developed multipurpose sport facilities have witnessed antagonism amongst stakeholders such as politicians, media, and general public (Greenberg, 2004). This acrimony intensifies particularly when there is the possibility of utilizing public subsidies for a sport facility construction or renovation (Santo & Mildner, 2010).

In order to develop a new facility, financial investments are required to generate both benefits and costs to the communities. In general, necessary funds for new facility constructions or renovations are subsidized through public funds (e.g., increasing tax rates for certain period, selling public bonds, etc.), private financing (e.g., personal fund/debt, mutual fund, etc.), and mixed financing (Greenberg, 2004). Investments in facility development produced social conflicts due to the evidence of generating a financial burden to the local government and residents instead of creating a sufficient amount of positive social legacy (MacAloon, 2008; Searle, 2002). The general public who supports the public subsidies anticipate gaining not only significant economic benefits but also positive social impacts (Feng & Humphreys, 2008; Siegfried &Zimbalist, 2000). However, general public who does not support the public funding has argued the social legacy and economic benefits may not compensate the excessive costs (Santo, 2005). Sport event and facility planners and administrators have experienced significant challenges to utilize public subsidies because of various negative impacts. Therefore, governments and administrators need to mitigate the social conflicts during the planning and construction process so that they can retain more support from general public toward facility development using public funds (Dehring, Depken, & Ward, 2007; Kaplanidou & Karadakis, 2010).

Social impact is defined as “…the changes of quality of life of residents of tourist destination” based on hosting tourism events (Mathieson & Wall, 1982, p. 137). The concept of social impact has been used through a wide range of studies including professional franchise team and facility development (Howard & Crompton, 2004), entertainment events (Delamare, 2001); mega-sport events (Kim & Petrick, 2005; Kim & Walker, 2012), and international sport events (Bull & Lovell, 2007). Social impact can be formed differently amongst stakeholders based on sociodemographics, proximity to the event locations, political preference, length of residency, or attachment to the community (Kim, Gursoy, & Lee, 2006; Kim & Petrick, 2005). Careful consideration of local residents in the planning process is a key for generating positive perceptions on sport tourism event and facility development (Bachleitner & Zins, 1999). Indeed, residents formed negative perceptions on event and infrastructure development when they were not considered as a primary part in the planning process (Fredline & Faulkner, 2002). Therefore, investigating residents’ perceptions on social impacts and their attitudes toward publicly funded sport facilities will provide critical information for event and facility administrators and planners. The purpose of this study is two-fold: (1) to explore the residents’ perception on social impacts derived from the development of a public funded multipurpose sport facility, and (2) to explore the relationship among the level of involvement, perceived social impacts, and future behavioral intentions.
In order to investigate a wide range of residents’ perceived social impacts, a modified Perceived Social Impact Scale (PSIS; Kim, 2012) consisting of 26 items under six factors adapted: community pride and consolidation (5 items), economic benefits (4 items), community development and image enhancement (6 items), economic costs (3 items), traffic problems (3 items), and security risks (5 items). After careful review of related literature, additional 5 items were adapted to PSIS (Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2006; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Kim & Walker, 2012). In order to test the internal consistency of modified PSIS, a pilot study was conducted using sample data (N = 165) from residents who experienced the facility development using public funds in a midwestern region of the U.S. (Cronbach’s α = .862). After the pilot study, three additional variables were added to the questionnaire: level of involvement (12 items; Bennett, Ferreira, & Polite, 2009), future behavioral intention (8 items), and socio demographic variables including age, gender, family income, race, education, and length of residency.

Data collection is underway from residents of Sedgwick County and vicinities in southeastern Kansas and will be completed by January, 2014. Participants has been selected via purposive and convenient sampling methods and participated in a self-administered questionnaire via online. Sedgwick County is a home of Intrust Bank Arena (IBA), built in January 2010 utilizing a public tax increment financing plan through collecting a special one percent county sales tax for a period of 30 months beginning July 1, 2005. Public financing for IBA was successfully employed with a total tax generation of $206.5 million which exceeded the total construction cost of $205 million (The 2013 Sedgwick County Adapted Budget, 2012). After the completion of data collection, data analyses will be conducted through a series of statistical procedures. First, preliminary analysis will be conducted to test internal consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach’s alpha scores. Second, frequency and descriptive statistics will be analyzed to identify residents’ level of involvement, perceived social impacts, future behavioral intentions, and sociodemographic information. Third, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) tests will be conducted to analyze the residents’ perceived social impacts by level of involvement and sociodemographic variables. Finally, a path analysis utilizing linear regression will be conducted to explore the relationship among level of involvement, perceived social impacts, and future behavioral intentions.

Previous research has emphasized on investigating economic justifications for facility development, while little research has been conducted on exploring socio-psychological impacts (e.g., social capital, psychic income, social impacts) for the local community and residents (Howard & Crompton, 2004; Kim, 2012; Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2000). This study will provide a wide range of practical implications for facility administrators and local governments based on analyzing residents’ perceptions on developing prospective facilities using public subsidies. Further theoretical implications and future directions for research will be presented.